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**International school students' experiences of their local environment – a case study from Qatar**

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# **International school students' experiences of their local environment – a case study from Qatar.**

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October 2016**

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## **Abstract**

Interest in children's experiences of their local environment is growing in education studies, geography and environmental psychology in response to increasing interests in children's everyday lives and personal geographies. Within international education research, those studies exploring experiences of international school education tend to explore senses of belonging, identity and notions of 'home'. However, the direct and embodied relationship expatriate children have with their local environment, and experiences of place, is a neglected field of study. The geographical context of this research in a gated compound in Qatar is significant. A growing volume of research from a variety of disciplines, notably urban planning studies, cultural geography and anthropology have started to explore gated communities as a feature of living spaces across the world – often for wealthy nationals and expatriates in countries with more extreme inequalities in wealth distribution. However, research focusing on the experiences of (expatriate) children learning and growing up in such contexts is a limited. This research explores how children living in a gated expatriate enclave in Qatar experience their local environment. With the rise in the number of gated communities and the growth of expatriate enclaves globally, this is a significant area of research with potential implications for educators and communities beyond the case study area. The findings of this research suggest that boundedness and surveillance in the gated community impact interactions with and constructions of space and place, limiting free exploration of the wider environment, host country interaction, and creating binary constructions of insides / outsides and insiders / outsiders. The research suggests ways educators in similar contexts can adapt and adopt geographical theory such as 'critical thirding' to help children deconstruct physical, social and imagined boundaries in their local environment, and critically engage with and participate in place-making in their local area. Furthermore, the potential for the incorporation of place-based educational practices is examined.

**Keywords:** place experience; international schools; Qatar; case study; place-based education; participatory research



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### *Definitions and common abbreviations used in thesis*

- **NQIS:** North Qatar International School – the site of the study (name of school anonymised). The school is split into two administratively and geographically distinct schools: the British Stream (site of this study) and the Indian Stream. The British Stream offers International Primary Curriculum, National Curriculum of England, GCSEs and A Levels. The Indian Stream offers Indian curriculum including Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exams.
- **NQC:** North Qatar Community – the gated (walled) compound where the vast majority of students live (name of community anonymised). NQIS is inside NQC. NQC is located between the towns of Al Dhakira and Al Khor north of Doha. Foreign staff and families of Ras Gas, Qatar Gas and Dolphin live in the compound. Housing is free to employees.
- **GC:** Gated Community – a residential area bounded by fences, walls, gates with certain requirements for entry / exit.
- **PBE:** place-based education.
- **Category of place experience:** code or theme of place experience developed by children in study.
- **P1:** Phase 1 (first phase of study).
- **P2:** Phase 2 (second phase of study involving widening of case).
- **KSA:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- **The Gulf:** oil-rich countries of the Middle East along the Arabian Gulf – Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates.
- **IBO:** International Baccalaureate Organisation
- **KS3:** Key Stage 3 (National Curriculum of England – in Years 7-9).
- **TCK:** Third-culture Kid – defined on page 4.



‘For me, initially, this dwelt upon the thought that these are immigrant rocks, arrived ‘here’ from somewhere else. It was an imagination that was happily congruent, therefore, with the notion of a global sense of place’.

Massey (2006 p. 35) writing about the geology and topography of the Lake District.



*Author's own photo:  
immigrant rocks and immigrant TCKs from the study relaxing on a rocky outcrop on Al Khor Island near NQC and NQIS*

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## ***1.1 Preface to the study***

This research is the result of my interest in the everyday experiences of the international school students I teach in their local environment of residence. As a geography educator, the environment and concept of place are at the core of subject I teach and engage with academically. Children's place experience, in particular their daily engagement with the local environment in which they live, learn and play, represents a fundamental aspect of their informal learning in geography, as a subject dealing with human-environment interactions. As someone who has lived in a number of different countries – as a child and adult – I am interested in how place is experienced, perceived and constructed, in particular by those who are globally mobile and living outside their home country like those in this study. In many ways, this stems from my childhood memories of place, and my adult negotiation of multiple significant places and homes with my own children.

In 2008 I moved to Qatar to work in an international school – North Qatar International School (NQIS) - located outside the capital city Doha, near a small town called Al Khor. After arriving at the supermodern Doha airport with a number of other new teachers, we boarded a coach to drive to North Qatar Community (NQC), located 70km north of Doha. NQC is a large company-owned gated compound between the town of Al Khor (population c. 20,000) and Al Thakira (a small former fishing village). The compound houses employees of the two main gas companies in Qatar – Ras Gas and Qatar Gas – both those working 'in the field' but also community employees such as teachers in the international school. The housing community is surrounded by walls which are 1.5 – 2m high, and can only be accessed through two security controlled gates – one of which can only be used by residents, the other which can be used by invited guests with visitor passes. NQC is reached along a highway running through the desert.

As an expatriate, compound living and expatriate enclaves, are familiar to me. In many contexts, there is a tendency for migrant workers to cluster and occupy liminal spaces (Kathiravelu, 2016). From the outset this geographically bounded space located in a somewhat hostile landscape of barren desert in which so many nationalities reside fascinated me. It was novel to live in a security-controlled environment, within the comforts of a green, manicured gated community (GC), and I

wanted to explore how the children I taught experience this environment, so different to the ones I grew up in. During the writing up of this thesis I was primarily based in Beijing, a city where many expatriates also live in gated communities. My most recent move to Johannesburg further adds to my personal experiences of gatedness – living in a city defined by the territorialisation, geographies of exclusion, privatisation of space - gates, walls, barbed wire – a landscape of fortification and associated performances of securitisation.

My interest in children's experiences of place developed further after my son was born. He was 8 months old when we moved to Qatar, and I began to speculate what the impacts of living in such a context (gated, enclave, transnational) might be for children, and how they experience place as privileged migrants, living in a spatially and socially controlled environment. The everyday experiences of children in their local environment are extremely significant in the development of spatial awareness, environmental cognition, and general well-being, and this is the starting point of this research. Malone's (2008) *Every Experience Matters* report, a metastudy of global research exploring children's experiences of the environment, concludes that children's explorative play and experiential learning outside the classroom are key to their development – socially and intellectually. However, children are increasingly withdrawing from public space and the 'natural world' because of parental and school fears of real and imagined risks (Valentine, 1997; Barratt Hacking, 2007).

## **1.2 The gap in research and contributions of this study**

None of the studies analysed in *Every Experience Matters* explore how globally mobile students, or Third Culture Kids (TCKs), experience their local environment. TCK is a term that emerged in the 1970s, first used by Useem (1976) to describe children growing up outside their 'home' or passport country and culture, with attachment to multiple cultures rather than one dominant one:

'Although they have grown up in foreign countries they are not integral parts of those countries. When they come to their country of citizenship (some for the first time), [such children] do not feel at home because they do not know the lingo or expectations of others – especially those of their own age. Where they feel most like themselves is in that interstitial culture, the third culture, which is

created, shared and carried by persons who are relating societies, or sections thereof, to each other'. (Useem, 1976 p.103-105)

The unique context of TCKs is proposed as significant for three key reasons. Firstly, their mobility means that they often do not experience extended periods of time in places, experiencing the *process* of place and changes over time. Secondly, their migrant status can mean a lack of community voice or community involvement impacting the ability to effect change, and potentially limiting opportunities to explore the local area because of, for example, language, and cultural barriers. Thirdly, connected to the previous point, many TCKs also live somewhat 'sheltered' lives often living in gated communities or expatriate enclaves, as in this study, with relatively limited opportunities for wider community and environmental engagement (Thieme, 2015). Some international schools (and expatriate families), have well-developed local area links, including service-learning programs encouraging participation in local life beyond school, and many school mission statements state the importance of community connections, but others do not.

In a broad sense this study further contributes to research into children's everyday lives through the lens of the local environment and place. Somerville (2012, p. 1) offers place as:

'a conceptual framework... a concept that bridges the material and symbolic, the local and global, and indigenous and non-indigenous knowledges. In each of these binaries, Western knowledge privileges one side of the binary as dominant or legitimate – the symbolic over the material, the global over the local, and the non-indigenous over indigenous. I propose that Place has critical power because it contains the possibility of reversing the order of privilege. Within the conceptual framework of place, a postcolonial pedagogy of place and methodology of postmodern emergence are proposed as the basis for a critical qualitative research'.

This study aims to take up this challenge, as I see it, to explore children's place experience in NQC from an 'insider's' perspective, using a critical qualitative framework, and contribute to existing knowledge and understanding of childhood place experience and environmental interactions in the following key ways:

1. The study contributes to understandings of place experience in a TCK context, framed within the context an international school.
2. It provides insights into how children living, learning and playing (to borrow parlance from Holloway and Valentine (2000)) in a gated expatriate enclave experience place – a neglected field of study (Freeman and Tranter, 2011; Sander, 2016). Gated communities, and expatriate enclaves are increasingly common residential forms and need further attention in terms of their impacts of children's daily lives and everyday experiences of home and the local area.
3. The study provides a theoretical and methodological framework from which to explore children's place experiences and local environment interactions and constructions, including a framework for co-analysis of data.
4. Finally, propositions are made to facilitate critical engagement – a critical and relational place-situated pedagogy - with place and the local environment in NQIS and potentially other international schools, adopting theory from cultural geography and critical post-modernist geographies. Specifically, Soja's (1996) theorising of Thirdspace and the power of 'critical thirding' is explored both from a curricula / theoretical and methodological perspective, and the implications of a relational understanding of place explored with reference to place-based practices in international schools.

According to Holloway and Valentine (2000), the most important contribution education researchers with a geographical background can make to analyses of childhood is to highlight the significance of place. By doing so they argue that texture and detail to any exploration of childhood as a sociological construct is added. Not only are conceptions, constructions and experiences of childhood social, they are also spatial and temporal. The spatially specific aspects of childhood are often neglected in academic works. By bringing place and the environment to the fore, the needs of children, for example for outdoor activity or other facilities for well-being, can also be highlighted, hence the practical nature and application of any exploration of children's everyday lives with a focus on spatiality.

### ***1.3 Situating this research***

This research draws upon a number of strands of theory and research about children, place and environment, but particularly new social studies of childhood and the Clark Group, with emphasis on experience of place (these strands are outlined further in Chapter 4). The Clark Group refers to the group of researchers in the late

1960s who explored children's experience from an environmental psychology perspective. Recent research in geography education, and the integration of theory from academic cultural geography into the school curriculum (Picton, 2010b; Bustin, 2011a, 2011b) has also influenced this research. Fundamentally, this study considers place / space, and childhood to be social constructed, and that place (a term used in this study interchangeably with 'local environment') is lived and rich with personal meaning – 'space is constantly in a state of becoming, and the actions and imaginations of adults, children and the non-human world play a part in this becoming' (Hackett *et al*, 2015 p.4).

The study of children's place experience is a growing field in education, children's geographies, social work and anthropology. As a study grounded in an international school, the dimension of international education research is explored with reference to studies exploring children's place construction and experiences, notably constructions of 'home' and wider experiences of mobility and migration. Studies in the geographies of childhood experiences of place have been particularly influential, especially to help inform methodologies and methods for example Cele, 2006; Roe, 2006; Christensen, *et al.*, 2015. In geography education studies, studies exploring children's experiences of place have tended to focus on distant places (Picton, 2008; Taylor, 2009), but these are also helpful in grounding children's understandings of place in a broader context, and theorising connections between how children understand distant places, and experience local places. Indeed, concepts of 'local' and 'distant' are increasingly blurred for international school students – where, for example, regular online contact with family and friends in a geographically distant place can make such places 'feel' much closer. Equally geographically nearby places might feel distant because of unfamiliarity and cultural distance. Here I question the usefulness of this local/distant binary in the context of TCKs, asking if local places can also be distant and vice versa. This study bridges children's geographies and education, and it is important to further emphasise my role as a geography educator, as this geographical lens, and focus on spatiality is core to this study. The study is also situated within the context of gated community research, a field of study that has exploded in recent years, albeit with little focus on children, and is explored further in Chapter 5.

Environmental experience, understood as everyday interactions with both the human and physical environment, is influenced by a number of factors including maturation (Bronfenrenner, 1979; Baacke, 1985) and also geography, culture, society and

nationality (UNICEF, 2005). Like Barratt Hacking *et al* (2007), a broad interpretation of childhood place experience, or environmental experience, is taken including the interaction between social, cultural, economic, political and physical environment experience. Although this research is interested in all of these aspects of place experience, it is the physical environment that is often the primary focus, primarily because of the immense heterogeneity of socio-cultural factors in the school, community and children in the research.

Research suggests that children's experiences of their local area are changing (Catling, 2005). It is suggested that children view and engage with environments in different ways to adults – children's knowledge, understandings and perspectives are not necessarily the same as adults, and show heterogeneity (Sebba, 1991; Hyun, 2005; Barratt Hacking & Barratt, 2009). For many writers the human self is forged in meeting and interacting with place (Tuan, 1977; Matthews, 1992; Manzo, 2003). Place is not just about physical structures, it is also about social and cultural structures which load places with meaning, feelings and significance. Children create bonds with places which are extremely strong. However, there is evidence that for TCKs bonds to physical places and locations are weaker than for children who are less geographically mobile – instead bonds to people and objects are intensified (Sander, 2016). Bonds to people, in particular immediate family, are stronger and more important in defining whether a place is special / significant, or indeed 'home' for many TCKs (Cannings, 2004).

As noted, children's experiences of their local environments are changing. A number of writers (Chawla, 1992; Matthews, 1992; Christensen, *et al.*, 2003; Catling, 2005) suggest that children's place experience with some freedom from adult intervention, is important to develop spatial capability. However, different children have different degrees of freedom in being allowed to meet with or make journeys with friends or alone (Malone, 2007) and in the predominantly Islamic context of this study boys are often given greater freedoms than girls to spend time outside without adult supervision. This study explores the experiences of 13-14 year olds in late middle childhood, a time when children tend to develop greater independence in their mobilities. Through these experiences *in* places, children build up a *sense of place* (Catling, 2005). For Catling (2005) there are limits which are imposed on how children experience their local areas, notably perceived safety risks (parent and child), a decline in accessible spaces for children and increased use of cars for transportation. This in turn leads to decreasing experience for children of / in their

local places and a developing construction of children as being out of place in certain places. However, these trends are not universal worldwide, and research such as this can contribute to the body of research about children's experiences worldwide and in different geographical settings.

#### **1.4 *Why research children's experience of their local environment?***

The significance of children's place and environmental experience is highlighted by Rikkinen (2000, p.88) who asks:

'Where do children go when they shut the doors of their homes and schools? How do they divide their environment into regions, secret hiding-places or shared playing areas? How does the living environment enlarge with increasing age and what kinds of new elements emerge within it? What kinds of physical features do children value in their surroundings, what do they fear or think of as dangerous, and by which features do they generally start to orient? In other words, how do they learn to estimate directions or distances between places? ..teachers should think about these questions so that their teaching can be based on students' life-worlds and support the growth of their personalities.'

Crucial to this study is the last sentence above – about how understanding children's everyday experiences can help educators ensure learning in the classroom is relevant, significant and engaging by linking learning to the environmental and socio-cultural worlds of the learner (Rogoff, 1990; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

According to Taylor (2009a) three distinct but interconnected strands of research about children and place have emerged:

- 1) environmental and mapping cognition linked to psychology, notably Piaget & Weil (1951).
- 2) New social studies of childhood informed more by social and cultural anthropology with more emphasis on socio-cultural contexts – identity, ideas, and experience



(Cele, 2006; Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Such research tends to be more theorized, on a smaller scale, and mostly about direct experience of the environment

3) The Clark Group in the 1960s intercepted geography and psychology, for example the work of Blaut (1991), Blaut & Stea (1971), and Hart (1979; 1997). Here, mental maps and the relationship between environment and behavior emerge as focuses, with another strand exploring mapping of the world (Saarinen, 1973).

This study is best situated within the second group – the new social studies of childhood with my concern for how children directly engage with and experience environments, although some of my methods would be familiar to The Clark Group, such as map drawing. There is a growing body of research supporting the assertion that environmental experience in childhood is key in establishing relationships with the environment, a sense of place, belonging and environmental concern (Chawla, 1988, 1998, 1999; Thomas & Thompson, 2004). Children also view and interact with environments in different ways to adults – their knowledge, understandings and perspectives are not necessarily the same as adults, and show heterogeneity (Sebba, 1991; Hyun, 2005).

Another strand of research has established the connection between children's physical and mental well-being and engagement with the (natural) environment (Faber Taylor & Kuo, 2006). This is against the backdrop of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2005) and concerns about the 'child-friendliness' of environments (Kytta, 2006). At the heart of Education for Sustainability (EfS) is a growing move towards interdisciplinary approach to sustainability in education, with growing focus on the role children play in their local environment in terms of nurturing and contributing to an ecologically and socially sustainable community (Avriel, *et al.*, 2010). However, there is concern in a number of industrialized countries about decreasing childhood engagement with their local area and the natural environment (Thomas & Thompson, 2004; Louv, 2005; Catling, 2005) and the impacts of this on well-being. The term 'natural environment' can be interpreted in a number of ways – if 'natural' is equated with being free from human influence, it would be almost impossible to find such a place, and as Ingold (2000) explores with reference to the 'dwelling perspective', such divisions between people and the landscape are not necessarily desirable. Instead, 'natural environment' is usually more loosely interpreted as 'outdoors', and generally associated with more rural environments. Shifts from outdoor to indoor entertainment are blamed on a

combination of the increasing use of technology for play (Robertson, 2006) and also fears about safety (Barratt Hacking & Barratt, 2007). Research suggests that the main concerns children have, which reduce time spent outside in free exploration of their local environment, are finding places to socialize, environmental quality, loss of habitats for wildlife, fewer opportunities for play (particularly for girls and minorities) and fears about crime and traffic (Valentine, 1996; Spencer & Woolley, 2000; Chawla, 2002). It is also suggested that childhood, being bound in globalization, commodification and commercialization, has been pushed indoors to the realms of television and online entertainment (McKendrick, *et al.*, 2000).

Research with children exploring their experience of place has been shown to have some key benefits to participants and the wider community, in school and beyond. According to Barratt Hacking and Barratt (2009), involving children in local environment research has three key benefits:

1. It helps children develop a deeper understanding of their local environment and its links with other environments.
2. Children can use their findings to effect change – for themselves, other people and for the natural environment, for example wildlife.
3. Children can develop their capacity as researchers and as local citizens.  
Research skills can be applied to their role as consumers, residents, citizens, stakeholders and voters.

The ideas above form some of the central founding philosophy of this research. This is combined with an understanding of children as environmental stakeholders (Barratt Hacking & Barratt, 2007). The geographical lens of scale is useful here, insofar as being an environmental stakeholder is relevant at every scale from local to global. For children in this study, most of whom as children living transnational lives, have multiple 'homes' / significant places, this sense of a global, interdependent and interconnected environment is particularly important.

Somerville *et al* (2009) make a strong case for the importance of acknowledging place in schools, drawing upon a number of research projects, many from Australia. The contribution of these research projects is to propose a new 'post-poststructural and postcolonial understanding of place, and place-learning' (p.3). They contrast the embodied and immediate sensory experience of place by childhood with modern place learning in schools which they claim to be increasingly placeless, where the

highest forms of knowledge are seen as being the most abstract and universal, perhaps best seen in the growth of concept-based learning and 'big concepts' in teaching and learning in curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB). The IB is a non-profit international education foundation offering four programmes of study: the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), the Diploma Programme (DP) and the IB Career-related Certificate (IBO). There are currently 4527 schools worldwide offering one or more of these programmes of study (IBO). The MYP (ages 11-16), for example, places great emphasis on curricula that is driven by enduring understandings that are timeless, and presumably placeless – that is, universal. This is exacerbated by the mobile nature of many children studying curricula like the MYP. Green (2007) claims that modernity is about placelessness, and schooling is a key project of modernity and process through which people 'unlearn' place attachments. Somerville *et al* (2009) argue for a reconceptualisation of place in schools, with a refocusing on the local – 'because we believe without an intimate knowledge of, and attachment to, local places there is no beginning point. One is always situated in local place, and without a concept of the local, change is not possible. Through place it is possible to understand the embodied effects of the global at a local level' (p.6). Therefore, for children to engage with the complexities of global issues, in particular environmental, it is necessary to contextualize these *locally*, but this very concept of 'local' is complicated for TCKs. The debate shifts from what place *is*, to what it as a concept *can do*. For Somerville *et al* the function of place here is to bridge the local and global to allow comprehension of how global processes are experienced locally.

Another important reason to explore children's experiences of place is connected to voice and agency. All children are affected by decision-making of other people in a number of ways, including those making decisions about their local environment. For TCKs this is particularly acute – the decisions made by parents, local governments, people in home/ host countries are all of significance impacting everyday life. However, arguably the children themselves are somewhat powerless and marginalised in these decisions, in part because of their status as children, but also because of their global mobility and 'non-localness'. 'Everyone should have the right to ... enough environmental resources for a healthy life and... that it is predominantly the poorest and least powerful people who are missing these conditions' (Stephens *et al.*, 2001). The idea of environmental justice highlighted by Stephens is applicable to children too. The introduction of children in decision-making in national and local governments is emerging in some countries, including England, for example in the

Children's Bill (DFES, 2004). However, in the context of this research in Qatar, and arguably in many locations where TCKs live, no such legislation or initiative exists, either within the national government of Qatar or the local company owned compound in which most of the children live. In this sense, children in the community under study here lack voice and agency to express their feelings about their local environment and its future development. This study aims to give voice to their experiences, with the potential to feed into decision-making about the local area from a more youth-centric position. The Qatar National Vision 2030 and documents from the Department of Social Development (Evans *et al.*, 2010) make no reference to children, environments, or children's voice. Instead, the 2030 goals, broadly based around sustainable development, highlight key challenges facing Qatar. There is reference to environmental management, but in the broadest possible terms. Within NQC there is some communication between the community administration / decision-makers and children, but this is to *inform* rather than *seek input* in decision-making.

To conclude, Catling (2004, p.78) nicely summarises many of the issues highlighted in this section, addressing the '*why*' of childhood experiences of environments, writing:

'While for, perhaps, the majority of children in the Western world, their experience [of place] provides hope, enjoyment and opportunity, for very many others in less economically favoured nations, childhood is fraught with risk, from poverty and need, from disease and from lack of opportunity for schooling. Where you are born and brought up, and what may happen there, are fundamentally important. Geographies affect children's lives. Children's geographies can be very different, dependent upon the quality of the immediate and local environment, and strongly related to access to income, services and amenities. While children come to understand and make use of places and environments in many common but diverse ways, the nature of their economic, social and environmental contexts remains highly influential. Where a child lives, the nature and the quality of the environment, and with whom they grow up have major impacts upon their lives. These geographies can be varied within communities and regions as well as between nations, in relation to wealth and poverty, in terms of more and less healthy

environments, physically and socially. Geographies matter for children’.

The implication here being that childhood experience of the environment are important, with great heterogeneity existing in both environmental quality and experiences. The mobility experienced by many international school students means their experiences are particularly heterogeneous, with multiple environments experienced, often with a degree of separation, both physical and cultural, from wider society in their places of residence.

### ***1.5 Framing environmental experience in a wider lexical and theoretical context***

The decision to frame this research as a study of local environmental *experience* was not taken without reviewing different ways of framing people’s understandings of and interactions with the world. A number of terms are used in literature to describe how people understand and experience their world. These overlap in many ways, but are important to examine for clarity. Some of these terms are more ‘everyday’ such as ‘understandings’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘perception’, others more technical, grounded in academia and various epistemologies, for example ‘discourse’. The term used in this research to describe child-local environment interactions is ‘place experience’, but this is interconnected with a number of other terms exploring the ways in which people understand the world. These are summarized in Table1 (adapted from Taylor, 2009b).

<i>Way of framing person's understanding of world</i>	<i>Examples and field of primary usage</i>	<i>Characteristics and issues</i>
<b>Affordances (of/to place)</b>	Gibson, 1979; Kytta, 2002.	The properties of place (physical and human) that frame human interactions with it: 'whatever it is about the environment that contributes to the kind of interaction that occurs' (Greeno, 1994, p.338). How people are attuned to place (Kytta, 2002).
<b>Place attachment</b>	Altman & Low, 1992; Twigger & Uzzell, 1996; Breakwell, 1986	Place attachment refers to the idea that people develop special bonds with certain settings and places. Can be challenged by concepts like non-places and placelessness.
<b>Attitude</b>	Piaget & Weil (1951): theory of knowledge growth, psychology)	Personal dispositions towards places / people. Essentialism by eliciting opinions about whole groups.
<b>Conception</b>	Piaget & Inhelder, 1956 (theory of knowledge growth, environmental education, psychology).	Ideas about a particular concept / phenomenon / people. Foregrounds individual agency, internal dimension.
<b>Construction</b>	Hengst, 1997 constructivist thought	Highlights individuals' active selection from pre-existing linguistic resources, and the way these accounts constitute view of the world. Tends to emphasize the individual rather than collective.
<b>Discourse</b>	Foucaultian, Philo (2004)	'Organized bodies of knowledge' (Philo, 2004, p122). Stress on power in framing worldview, downplays agency.
<b>(Place) Experience</b>	Tuan (1977), Malpas (1999), Simkins (2008), Seamon (2013). Phenomenology, psychology, philosophy of place.	Arguably a term which encapsulates many listed here – an all-embracing term in which others are situated within or as part of. Used by Tuan (Tuan, 1977, p.8) as 'a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows or constructs reality'. Strongly associated with philosophy of place, e.g. Malpas (1999), who developed the term further. Encompasses a range of relationships with place including sense of place, place identity, place attachment (also identified in this Table).
<b>(place) Identity</b>	Proshansky <i>et al</i> (1982); environmental psychology	Feelings towards place: "potpourri of memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience" (Proshansky <i>et al.</i> , 1983, p.59). How experiences of place impact identity – how memory of past carried into future. Can also refer to the identity of a place.
<b>Geographical imagination</b>	Gregory, (1994), Massey (2006) Geography	Encompasses all aspects of peoples understanding of the world – mental images and how these affect behaviour (Massey, 2006, p.48).
<b>Images</b>	Harrington, (1998) environmental psychology	Individuals view of the world, like perception. Emphasis on thinking, internal dimension) Often seen as having a visual element.
<b>Imaginative geographies</b>	Said, (1978); Picton, (2008) literary theory, postcolonial geographies	Similar to geographical imaginations but with greater emphasis on power in construction of knowledge.
<b>Knowledge</b>	Piaget & Weil (1952) theory of knowledge, psychology	Used in these contexts to refer to children's ability to communicate factual information – place names, locations, routes.
<b>Mental collage</b>	Tversky, (2003) cognitive psychology	Overlapping layers, contradiction, and inconsistency. More complex than mental map. Internal emphasis, 'structures of mental spaces' (Tversky 2003, p.66).
<b>Mental map</b>	Gould & White, (1974) cognitive psychology	Mental picture of an environment, used for route-finding, Internal emphasis.
<b>Misconceptions / alternative conceptions</b>	Dove, (1998) Geography education, psych, science education	Describes incorrect assimilation of teaching or incorrect mental constructs. Assumes right answer, and that misconceptions are unhelpful to development of knowledge.
<b>Narratives</b>	Clandinin & Connelly, (2004) social, education, children's geographies	Accounts people construct about the world – foregrounds shared nature of identity construction, experience, and temporal dimension.
<b>Perception</b>	Clark group – Blaut, Stea, Hart.	Person's view of world, used in studies about mental maps or preferences for places / peoples. Individual foregrounded.
<b>Representation</b>	Hall (1997); Harrington (1998) Geography, cultural theory, psychology.	Foregrounds externalization – the thing externalized (image, map, writing). Link to internal as representations – mental representations – shared within cultures mediated by language.
<b>Sense of place</b>	Relph (1976), Tuan (1977), Massey (2005) geography, literature studies	A specific aspect of experience of place (influenced by phenomenology), considers role of arts. Contrasts with placelessness and non-places (Auge, 2005). Lim & Barton (2010, p 329) explain it as 'a person's cognitive, affective, and embodied understandings of a place that are cultivated through a living ecological relationship with the place'. Massey challenges assumptions of bounded and authentic representations of place by calling for a progressive sense of place – multiple and critical perspectives.
<b>Social representations</b>	Moscovici's theories (Farr & Muscovici, 1984) social psychology	Focus on content as well as structure of understandings, social context of production and processes of change. Focus on language in methodologies.
<b>Stereotypes</b>	Holloway & Valentine (2000), psychology, general use	Refers to over-generalization of characteristics of people / place to an undesirable degree.
<b>Understandings</b>	Barratt & Barratt Hacking (2000) education	Loose umbrella for people's thinking about something. Commonly used interchangeably with other terms such as conception. Use of plural indicates interest in multiple ideas.

*Table 1: Ways of framing understanding of the world*

Many of the terms for understanding the world in Table 1 are in some way relevant to this study, insofar as they can all be applied to, or are embedded within, children's experiences of place. Indeed, a struggle at the beginning of this research was how to frame the study – as a study of perception of place? Sense of place? Constructions of place? However, the term 'experience' is arguably all-encompassing for all these terms, with all the ways of understanding the world foregrounded in *experience* of the world.

For example, sense of place, understandings, constructions and perceptions are all bound up in and emerge from and through experience. Perhaps the best way of differentiating between the terms in Table 1 is the degree of focus on the internal world of the mind – the cognitive processes – versus the degree of focus on the representations of these, for example in research data. Thus ways of framing the study has epistemological and methodological implications. It is useful to separate the cognitive, internal experience of place with representations of these. No method for eliciting experiences of place and the environment can be 'full' or entirely authentic – any representation (be it visual, verbal, written) of these experiences is incomplete or lacking. The challenge for this research is to develop appropriate methods to as *fully as possible* enable children to (re)present their everyday embodied and cognitive experiences of place, through mixed methods and triangulation of these. Co-analysis with participants in this study goes some way to try and ensure authenticity and validity in the data.

Malpas (1999) has written extensively on the theme of place and experience from a phenomenological perspective, the most well-known being the book *Place and Experience: a philosophical topography*. Malpas encourages us to view place as something which makes human experience possible. Key is the idea of interconnectivity and interdependencies in terms of place experience. Malpas explores the objectivities and subjectivities of place, self- and other-subjectivities and memory, action and narrative. An example being the exploration how memories are nested within each other in the same way that places are nested within other places – and the overlaps between these. Objective and subjective space cannot be explored in isolation. Both are needed in the intersubjective space opened when two people experience the same object, environment, place. Actions and agency are located in narratives of place, structured by place. Therefore:

‘To have a sense of one’s own identity....is to have a sense, not of some simple underlying self that is one’s own, but rather of a particular place in the world. While the having of such a sense of place consists in having a grasp of a conceptually complex structure – a structure that encompasses different forms of spatiality, concepts of self, of others and of an objective order of things – it is also a sense of place that is necessarily articulated linguistically’ (Malpas, 1999 p.152).

Crucially for Malpas, childhood experiences and memories of place are an important aspect of self-identity, future trajectories and self-reflection (p.182–3). With age, these childhood memories increase in significance, as noted in autobiographical memory studies. Malpas emphasizes narrative in structuring experience, identity, environmental action is significant in an educational context, placing value on the exploration of the relationships between self, place, significant places / events and identity. An important contribution of Malpas in education is highlighting the importance of conceiving place as being the *structure that enables all human experience to occur*. Thus, understanding and learning about place (local / distant, past / present / future) allows a deeper understanding of self, a significant curriculum implication in the context of schools and learning. The following sections begin to explore the international school context of this study, and the specific context of the school itself.

## **1.6 The international school context of the study**

Chapter 4 explores international schools, their students and place interactions. However, it is useful to provide some background context to international schools and international education here, since this study is grounded in these contexts. In many senses international schools, international education and the experiences of their students are themselves bound up in complex negotiations of place and different environments. Both international education and ‘international school’ are contested concepts with a range of definitions (Hayden, 2006; Hayden & Thompson, 2013). Some terms used interchangeably with international education include ‘cosmopolitanism’ (Gunesch, 2004) and ‘global education’ (Clarke, 2004). Therefore, a ‘national’ school can embrace international education – the term is inclusive. International schools themselves are a form of ‘international education’ (Hayden, 2006), with varying emphasis on ‘international education’ in the sense of



inclusiveness, internationalism or cosmopolitanism. International schools are heterogeneous entities – but often cater for expatriates, employ teachers from overseas, are fee-paying and offer international programmes of study. However, in some countries it is now very common for international schools to cater for an almost exclusively ‘local’ market, or in the case of countries like China, Malaysia and Thailand to have ‘international programs’ within national schools.

NQIS is a British curriculum international school with a diverse student body catering mostly to expatriates. At the time of research NQIS was split into a lower (Reception – Year 4), middle (Year 5 – Year 8) and upper-school (Year 9 – Year 13) with the largest numbers of students being in the lower- and middle-schools. The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) was followed in the lower school and the middle school was in the process of implementing a new curriculum, loosely based on the IPC and English curriculum focusing of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS). The upper-school students completed IGCSEs, culminating in AS / A2 levels.

There are two key reasons why I chose to undertake doctoral research in this relatively unknown residential area of Qatar. The first was primarily practical – at the time of research it was my place of residence and employment. I had excellent access to all facilities on the compound and I worked in the school. I have a deep understanding of the community, occupying a liminal space in between the insider/outsider binary of research – researcher, teacher, resident and part of the ‘bundle of trajectories’ (Massey, 2005) that make the case. Secondly, as previously noted, although there is growing interest in the implications of gated communities and a growing body of academic research, few have focused on children living in such communities and given them voice to express their feelings and perceptions of place. Fundamentally I am interested in how children resident on the GC construct their environment. I am interested in how the children utilise space – their everyday geographies in an environment which, on first inspection, can be viewed overpowering in terms of its physical homogeneity, geographical isolation and boundedness in terms of control and surveillance – be it from the active security guards, gates / walls or simply living in such close proximity to friends and colleagues.

The student body represented the nationalities of the workers from Ras Gas, Qatar Gas and Dolphin – all petro-companies in Qatar. An increasing number of local Qatari children started attending the school, often as fee-paying students, and some

of these children took part in this study. This is an important point since expatriate children are resident on NQC, while Qatari students are all resident in surrounding settlements. This is significant in terms of place experience, with Qatari children offering indigenous perspectives and experiences to contrast with those of expatriate children living within NQC. Any employee of the two companies has the right to send their children to either NQIS British Stream, the focus of this research, or NQIS Indian Stream without charge. This is not a particularly transient community. Average length of residency is currently 6 years, and given the compound has only been established for 14 years this is significant.

In total forty-four nationalities are represented at the school:

Nationality	Percentage of student body
Indonesian	25
Malaysian	13
Pakistani	13
Qatari	11
UK/USA/NZ/Australia/South Africa	6
Other nationalities	32

*Table 2: main nationalities represented at NQIS*

Although there are some ‘white collar’ professionals (mostly engineers or supervisors), a large number of residents, that is parents of the children in this study, undertake mostly manual work within the gas companies, sometimes offshore. The salaries offered by the companies, compared to those available in worker’s home countries, are exceptional. An online survey of parents conducted in the initial stages of the research revealed that although most have attended tertiary education, this is most likely to be in technical colleges leading to professional rather than academic qualifications. However, aspirations for children to undertake further academic study in home countries in subjects like medicine and engineering is extremely high. For most parents the expectation for children is to attend top universities at ‘home’, with a view to probably returning to expatriate life once qualifications have been gained. A growing number are, however, choosing to encourage their children to attend local universities – often overseas campuses of North American universities in Education City, Doha. The primary motivation for being in Qatar is financial, but safety and security are also noted by some. Scurry *et al* (2013) in their study of expatriate identity and motivations in Qatar found that economic factors and job opportunities

were by far the most important reasons for locating to the country, and that many expatriates viewed the experience of living and working there in terms of loss (of freedoms, family contact). Issues such as Qatarisation and challenges to permanency were noted as important in developing feelings of uncertainty. Broadly speaking the parents of children at NQIS can be described as aspirational, hoping that their children will gain higher qualifications than themselves. However, the parent and study body does not necessarily fit the typology of prestigious international schools elsewhere, targeting NGO, embassy and transnational corporation (TNC) affiliated families, often of European, North American and East Asian origin. It shares more in common with other petro-company-sponsored schools in the Middle East, West Africa and Indonesia – see 5.1.4 for a discussion of similar schools.

## 1.7 Geographical context

As noted before, the geographical context of the community is important. NQC is located 70km north of Doha (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Map of Qatar (Google Maps)



*Figure 2: North Qatar Community GC (Google maps)*

These maps (Figures 1 and 2) highlight the relative isolation of NQC, although just 70km from Doha. The natural environment is dominated by flat, rocky desert with small outcrops. The contrast of the dark residential areas with surrounding desert is because of the greening of the compound. Qatar experiences extreme summer temperatures, reaching 53 C in 2010. New gated communities are seen being built around NQC as other companies such as Shell move to the area.

## **1.8 Research Questions**

I have two key research questions (RQs) – one theoretical question which drives a further methodological question arising from it.

RQ1: How do children living within a gated expatriate community in Qatar and attending a British international school experience their local environment?

RQ2: How can contrasting aspects of children's environmental experience be elicited through different methods?

Implicit within my first question is children's experience of living in expatriate gated communities - whether the 'gatedness' of the environment in which the children live, study and play is significant in their constructions and experiences of place, and if so in what ways? While this is not a research question in its own right, it is a contextual focus for RQ1.

## **1.9 Structure of thesis**

My thesis is structured in eleven chapters. The next four chapters are a review and synthesis of literature. Chapter 2 explores concepts of place, drawing primarily from human geography. As a study examining children's place experience and local environment, understanding how place is conceptualised is important. The terms space, place and local environment are used somewhat interchangeably in this study, and concepts of space and place also inform the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Place in Chapter 2 is shown to be understood as perceived, conceived and lived, using Soja's (1996) Lefebvrian theorization of space as socially produced. Massey's conceptualisation of place as process, unbounded and as negotiated are also integrated into the study, with implications for how I conceive the case in case study research.

Chapter 3 begins by examining concepts of childhood itself, as socially constructed, and goes on to explore children's experiences of place and environments, and how children learn about environments. Children are conceived in this research not as 'less than' adults, but as 'different to', with their own unique interactions with and experiences of place. The socially constructed nature of childhoods is emphasised, as well as adult and environmental challenges to children's agency when interacting with their local environment and everyday spaces of childhood.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus more towards the international school context of this study. The chapter is split into two distinct but interconnected parts. The first part examines place and the local environment as it is articulated and integrated into learning, in the school specifically, but also more generally in pedagogical practices. Place in the school curriculum is examined with reference to growing calls for place-based education (PBE), place-situated pedagogies and critical pedagogies of place (Kitchens, 2009; Gruenewald, 2003a). The contested relationship between the local and global in PBE generally, and international schools specifically, is also explored. Relationships between international schools and their local environmental contexts, in a physical and social sense, are explored. The second part further integrates the study in the field of international education studies through an exploration of issues of place attachment, identity, belonging and concepts of 'home' in globally mobile contexts.

Chapter 5 highlights the 'gated' context of the research, which is a significant feature of this study, and part of its contribution to the field. The combination of walls, gates (physical and cultural), surveillance and a harsh physical environment act to limit children's independent mobilities in NQC. Chapter 5 highlights gaps in research about gated communities in terms of children's everyday experiences of these spaces. Of significance is that many TCKs attending international schools live in gated complexes – whether security controlled apartment blocks or large gated housing estates like NQC. Gatedness is understood in the study not just in terms of physical gates and boundaries, but also in terms of 'gated lives', 'gated minds' and the territorialisation these can lead to.

Chapter 6 outlines research design and the ethical guidelines adhered to in the study. The theoretical underpinnings of the research, as an interpretive case study, are explained. Chapter 6 also explains how Massey's theorisation of place as a 'bundle of trajectories' (2005) is extended to help understand and bound the case using Taylor's (2013) theorisation of the 'case as space'. Attention is given to issues of trustworthiness in case study research and how this is enhanced in the study.

Chapter 7 moves on to explore the specific methods deployed. The value of participatory, visual and place-interactive methods is explained in an international context where many children speak English as a second or other language. This study uses mapping, concept mapping, photovoice and walks as the primary

methods of data collection. Focus groups and a process of co-analysis of data is also deployed, and explained further in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 begins explaining the process of participatory analysis used in the study, within a broad framework of qualitative data analysis. The process of participatory analysis is explained, and the 'thirding' of the researcher-participant binary in this stage of the project. The relationship between Phases 1 and 2 (P1/P2) is explained, as well as the relationship between participant generated categories of place experiences, analytical concepts and my own researcher generated theory. This is understood as a juxtapositioning of participant and researcher analysis, or 'insider' and 'outsider' analysis.

Where Chapter 8 focuses on the process of analysis, Chapter 9 examines the outcomes of this process. The categories of local environment place experience developed by participants are explained and theorised in this chapter. The participant generated categories of place experience drive the reporting and analysis of data, used somewhat like *a priori* codes. However, these categories are theorised by myself as a researcher in a relationship understood as the juxtapositioning of data and ideas – a 'layering' of theory over participant generated categories. For each category, commonalities and divergences within the data, and with existing research is outlined where possible.

Chapter 10 summarises key findings and contributions of the research. These are synthesised by myself from Chapter 9 analysis and findings, and distilled into key findings. It is through these key findings that the research has moved forward understandings of childhood place experience, as well as proposing avenues for further research. I frame both Chapters 10 and 11 as theorising *with* and *beyond* the data and case, and thus ideas are put forward more tentatively here.

Chapter 11 builds on the theoretical contributions of Chapter 10, putting forward key propositions –theoretical and methodological. At the heart of these propositions is the suggestion of incorporating critical pedagogies of place into place-based / geographical learning in international schools to foster a global sense of place and break down real and perceived binaries of place evident in the physical and human environment. The Lefebvrian-inspired ideas of Soja (1996) are operationalised from a curriculum / theoretical and methodological perspective. Chapter 11 also makes suggestions for avenues for further research.

### ***1.10 Summary and conclusions***

My introductory chapter has situated this research in three ways: theoretical, geographical and personal. I have positioned myself in the research – as teacher, researcher and community member - something developed further in Chapter 6 with reference to the ‘case as space’ and ideas of participatory consciousness. I have outlined the areas where I consider my study to be able to make a meaningful contribution to discussions of childhood place experience, environmental interactions and international education. The following chapter takes on the task of distilling some key theories of place that have informed this study of local environment (local place) experience.



# Chapter 2: Place as a conceptual framework for understanding childhood environment experiences

## *2.1 Exploring place: the view from geography*

If we think of space as that which  
allows movement, then place is pause;  
each pause in movement makes it  
possible for location to be transformed  
into place (Tuan, 1977, p.6).

As a study of children's experiences and perceptions of their local environment, the concept of place, a fundamental concept in geography and wider in the social sciences, is of great significance. Indeed, this is a study of local place experience and is firmly grounded in theorisation of place. Place is the lens through which I theorize the local environment. Somerville and Green (2015 p.36) note:

‘as a conceptual framework, place provides a bridge between the local and global, real and representational, indigenous and non-indigenous, and different disciplinary approaches. Place itself is theorised in different ways according to the perspective of each person. Children have their own theories of place... Rather than defining and delimiting what place means, we ask what can place enable in our thinking and empirical research?’.

As a result, I draw upon a number of theories of place to inform this study, and help understand and theorise children's local environment place experiences. Somerville and Green's justification of place as a conceptual framework for exploring childhood experience touches upon many of the issues central to this study – how the local and global meet in the lives of children in an international school, how indigenous (Qatari) and non-indigenous (TCK) knowledges intermingle, how children's real and imagined places combine.

The importance of place and space as concepts is not limited to geography. However, as concepts they have been operationalised by geographers, and other academics, in different ways. Leading figures like Edward Said and Michel Foucault have placed emphasis on the importance of space / place in understanding socio-cultural phenomena with an emphasis on power. As Foucault (1980 p.149) writes:

‘A whole history of spaces – which would be at the same time a history of powers – remains to be written, from the grand strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat’.

While Foucault challenges the power of space/place in lived experiences, theorists exploring globalization and information society have had to grapple with concepts of space and place in ‘crumpled’ and ‘distorted’ form – Jean Baudrillard, Anthony Giddens, Manuel Castells and Doreen Massey being four who stand out in their contributions to spatio-temporal analyses of space and place. However, it is always important to remember when referring to theorists such as Soja, Lefebvre and Massey, that their intention for theory to inform analyses of childhood place experience was never intended. However, their theorising helps to disrupt assumptions about childhood and children’s interactions with the environment – that children are experts in their lived experience of place, not less knowledgeable, but with different knowledges.

## ***2.2 Humanistic geography and place***

Humanistic geography in the 1970s started to challenge positivist notions of space and place by introducing theory from phenomenology and existentialism (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). Experiences of people in space, encountering place, became a central focus – and much of my thinking is influenced in part by the poetic writings of Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977). As noted by Tuan (1977, p.387) place ‘has a history and a meaning. Place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning’. Tuan notes that people talk of the personality or spirit of different places – uniqueness and something more than a place as a location or node. Tuan also notes that people have both desires and fears with specific places, and this is of course also true for children, perhaps even more acutely than it is for adults. Constructions

of place for Tuan are largely individualistic, although attachments to place and meanings are often shared. Thus, places mean different things for different people. Meaning attached to space is multisensory and builds over time we experience place in visual, tactile, aural, taste and smell terms, significant when considering how to explore constructions of place in empirical research like this, and ideas which will be developed in my methods chapter. This embodiment of understandings of space and place was developed by humanistic geographers. Being in a place involves all of the senses above, and any exploration of children's construction of place needs to dig beyond the visual. For Relph it is the uniqueness of place that is central – it is this uniqueness, and the ability of those 'insiders' to relate to this, that makes places. From this emerged a strong sense of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' places. However, here authentic is seen from a humanistic perspective best described as being in place or 'fitting in'.

So in terms of the context of this research in a school, we can take from humanistic geographers the importance of allowing children to explore their sense of place and the importance of first-hand experience (fieldwork or PBE). However, some humanistic concepts of place such as authenticity, insideness and uniqueness are challenged by globalising forces, which will now be considered.

### ***2.3 Globalisation and transnationalism - challenges to bounded understandings of place***

The connections between children's environment experience and globalisation may not at first be obvious, beyond the TCK status of the children in this study, but children in all contexts are increasingly embedded in complex networks of global and local flows (Horton *et al*, 2013; Baldasser & Merla, 2013). As Holloway & Valentine (2000 p.18) write:

'The spaces of everyday life.. are produced through their webs of connections within wider global social processes (which are in turn reshaped through their constant rearticulation), just as spatial discourses are important as they inform socio-spatial practices in the spaces of everyday life (which in turn reinforce our spatialized ideas about childhood)'.

Places are also changed and challenged by globalising forces, impacting how they are experienced and negotiated by children. Places do not exist in isolation - they are connected, interconnected and dynamic. This is particularly true in settings like NQC – c. 10,000 residents from 44 different countries living in geographically defined area (a gated compound). Symbolically the community is a geographically relatively isolated node with physical boundaries (security gate, walls around the compound and the 'outside'), but through its inhabitants is emotionally, socially and economically deeply connected to disparate locations around the world. NQC is paradoxically both highly territorialised and bounded, yet deeply unbounded and embedded in processes of deterritorialisation on a more macroscale.

For Massey (2005), space and place are the product of interrelations bound up in power geometries. It is here that an understanding of globalisation is essential to attempt understand NQC as a place. For Massey, understanding places as having a singular identity leads to seeing places as bounded with *insides* and *outsides* (and insiders and outsiders). This sense of bounded space is arguably strong in NQC as a GC with security and physical walls. Residents have ID cards and cars have security stickers allowing entrance, and upon arrival residents go through various processes and performances of becoming 'insiders' – for example attending 'community inductions'. All non-resident vehicles are stopped and sometimes searched, and visitors need permission from a resident to enter the compound. However, places have multiple identities as they have people who have different senses of place. These identities, experiences and senses of place are bound up in the global – they are affected by and affecting what is happening on a global scale – a global sense of place is perhaps more accurate. This outward looking sense of place is captured in Massey's writing:

'What gives a place its specificity is ... the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus ... each 'place' can be seen as a particular, unique point of their intersection. It is, indeed, a meeting place. Instead, then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated movements in networks of social relations and understandings' (Massey, 1997, p.322).

If places (like NQC or NQIS) are seen in this way, fluidity of movement of people in and out, whether temporary or permanent, is not something threatening. The

*uniqueness* of place is maintained *despite* globalizing trends. For Massey, to understand places you must look at their connections to other places. 'A progressive sense of place would recognize that, without being threatened by it. What we need, it seems to me, is a global sense of the local, a global sense of place' (Massey, 1997, p.323).

This understanding of place forms the core of my thinking about NQIS/NQC and the wider area of study. Massey talks about 'a global sense of place' (2002) where the 'thrown-togetherness' of physical proximity is even more significant in an age of globalisation. But flows are uneven in an era when mobility seems to be celebrated before stability (compare a space of flows rather than a space of places). Appadurai (1996 p.33) operationalizes the multiple processes of globalization in what he terms 'disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy'. In these flows, people, machinery, money, images and ideas are increasingly following diverse paths, traveling at different speeds and are viewed by different cultures and agents with different attitudes, thus receiving different reactions from different people and communities across the world (*ibid*: 37). This fluidity must be emphasized, but today the speed and scale of these flows is so great that the 'disjunctures' are central to the politics of global culture and constructions of place. Place construction and identity exists in a nexus and each new time-space compression fuels further transformation.

Massey's exploration of the concept of space and place is fundamental to this study insofar as it puts spatiality at the heart of processes such as global mobility – privileging space, scale and power, in particular it's exertion over space and through geographical imaginations. For Massey (2005) places and our experiences of them are produced and defined by relations and interaction. The distinction between space and place for Massey is unclear – places are products of interaction and are temporal – constantly reforming as an emergence of uniqueness. The uniqueness is a result of the set of interrelations - human *and* non-human - in that place. Place is therefore a 'bundle of trajectories', in many senses thrown together, at a certain point at a certain time. I find this understanding of place as a 'bundle of trajectories', as a meeting place of human and non-human components or stories, constantly making and remaking itself as these trajectories change, particularly useful for trying to conceptualise the mobile and transient nature of expatriate communities and the international schools I work in. It emphasises change (place as *process*), uniqueness, the unbounded nature of space and place and the inherent dynamism and processes of negotiation in places like international schools (place as

negotiated). Thrown togetherness emphasises the randomness and unexpected nature of space and interaction in space, and therefore experiences of it. Previously unconnected narratives are brought into contact in our lives in the surprise of space. This throwntogetherness of space is more acute for those (hyper)-mobile in our era of fast travel and global communications and in globally mobile communities such as NQC and NQIS. More links are made, and more links *aren't* made – indeed, who and what we make links with in places seems to be more selective with more opportunity, and links are broken quickly in expatriate contexts. It is quite possible for some people to forge distant links as easily as more local links – neighbours can be strangers, but distant people and places can be familiar. This is a key issue for transnational communities and for children on NQC.

It is important to note that for Massey place and space are concrete entities. Using the example of seemingly ephemeral 'cyberspace' (a globalised space embedded in complex culture wars and power struggles) is materially located in servers, hard drives and supercomputers in 'real' places around the World. Space is therefore not abstract and meaningless – it is produced by meaningful relations and through (meaningful) interactions with physical places. This is significant for this research. Massey does not seek to separate space (and place) and time, but instead sees the two as connected insofar as *time unfolds change and space unfolds interaction*. To conceptualise Massey's place as a 'bundle of trajectories', consideration of time *and* space is needed. Such ideas, although abstract, are useful to critically explore the meaning children in this study attach to place. Diversity in space and places is clearly a challenge in negotiating multiplicity. Links can create conflict which is political and powerful. Negotiating conflict needs to be done with consideration of the emerging uniqueness of place and the specific web of interrelations that exists there in place.

## **2.4 Postmodern views on place**

Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* has influenced a number of theorists and critical explorations of spatiality. As the title suggests Lefebvre explores how space is produced by people – 'social space ceases to be indistinguishable from mental space on the one hand, and physical space on the other' (1991 p.27). The Lefebvre conceives trialectical interactions between the triad of the perceived, conceived and lived spaces (see Figure 3).

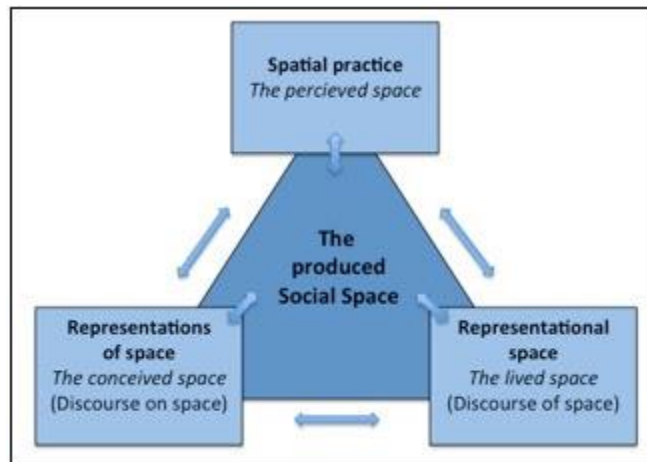


Figure 3: Lefebvrian space: perceived, conceived and lived<sup>1</sup>

A useful theoretical way of making sense of the world comes from urban geographer and sociologist Edward Soja (1996) whose theoretical conceptualization of space and place has informed this research. His conceptual tool looks at three interacting spaces which interact to form people's lived experience in their environments, theoretically grounded in Lefebvrian triad of space. He describes Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace. Firstspace is the built environment, including architecture, roads, form, function – physical and tactile space. Secondspace is representational space – how people perceive and represent a place, or its imagined geographies. An example here, using NQC, could be the variety of ways the gates and walls of the community could be perceived – as security / safety, as a possible place of play and recreation or as an inhibitor to personal mobility. Secondspace is conceived through the signs and symbols of language. Thirdspace is lived space – the experience of living in Firstspace mediated through expectations of the Secondspace (Bustin, 2001a;2011b). Soja's theorising looks at how Firstspace and Secondspace *combine* to make Thirdspace. Thus conceiving Thirdspace requires consideration of both physical space and mental space. This is arguably a powerful tool to use to examine children's experiences and representations of their experiences of environments. As a conceptual tool, Thirdspace often looks at the perspectives of those who are 'out of place' or marginalised in society, for example the elderly, homeless or even children – those whose voices are sometimes lost.

<sup>1</sup> Image from <https://uptheosroad.wordpress.com/2015/01/23/using-lefebvres-triad/> (accessed 28/06/16)

Indeed, it is Soja's (1996) theory of Thirdspace, and epistemological approach to space turning epistemology into ontology, which influences this research, in particular by informing analysis of the data produced and analysed by the children, and in theoretical propositions. Soja asserts 'that space is never given. It is never an "empty box" to be filled, never only a stage or a mere background' (Arentsen *et al*, n.d. p.9). Space (and place) is always culturally constructed. Like any cultural and physical entity it is formed and adapted, accepted or rejected. For Soja, spatiality is central in our lives and therefore descriptions of the world. His three means of spatial thinking are understood as distinct, but blurred. In modernist thinking, space is either perceived or conceived, whereas the third aspect – lived space (Thirdspace) – is both perceived and conceived. This is beyond physical form or mental construct transcending both – it is a deliberately loose term which is both liberating and frustrating when theorising with it. The power of Thirdspace in this study is that it posits the potential to break down binaries of place (Table 3), where physical and social hybrids can exist. Thirdspaces are forged by the effects of a shifting and changing culture – they are 'spaces of transition; transition between localities and over time. They elude the reflection of a single permanent power structure and are places of simultaneity and transience. They relate to both poles of binary conceptions of cross-cultural space and yet at the same time entirely transcend them. More than a mental place, thirdspaces hold the possibility for socio-political transformation' (Arentsen, n.d. p. 9). The process of 'critical thirding-as-othering', that is the breaking down of binaries, is of particular relevance in the context of this research. In many senses the context and lives of the children, indeed the environment (physical and social), of this research sits in the *in-between* space of many binaries summarised in Table 3. The implications of these for learning and curriculum will be explored in Chapter 11.

Global	Local
Public	Private
Stable	Transient
Home	Abroad
Bounded	Open
Integrated	Liminal
Free	Restricted
Place (meaningful)	Non-place (without meaning)
Multicultural	Segregated
Offline	Online
Nature	Culture



Natural	Unnatural
Rural	Urban

*Table 3: Binaries of place relevant to NQC and NQIS*

In addition to Soja's theorizing about space and place, the concept of non-places and 'placelessness' (Relph, 1976) are of relevance. Augé (1996) examines spaces such as shopping malls, airports, highways, cinemas and so forth as examples of non-places – symptoms of post-modernism and accelerated global society – 'a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical or concerned with identity, will be a non-place' (Augé, 1996 p 34). These spaces are transitional rather than places of habitus, and like Massey's space and place are seen as a result of flows and interaction. Augé contrasts non-places with 'anthropological place' – places people are invested in and places where culture and identity are forged. It could be argued that some of the non-places Augé describes are the very spaces which are the backbone of everyday life in Qatar. Building on humanistic notions of 'placelessness', Augé stresses how these non-places do not celebrate one culture in particular (although certain cultures *will* dominate, in the case of Qatar this is undeniably Islamic cultures) and often act to manage the movement of people from one place to another. Contrasting with non-places, 'anthropological place' have 'three characteristics in common. They want to be – people want them to be – places of identity, of relations and of history. The layout of the house, the rules of residence, the zoning of the village, placements of altars, configuration of public open spaces, land distribution, correspond for every individual to a system of possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts whose content is both spatial and social. To be born in a place, to be 'assigned to residence' (Augé, 1996 p.53).

An interesting addition to writing about non-place comes from Triebel (2015) who explores the concept of 'non-place kids', and how for some globally mobile TCKs, non-places such as airports actually offer a place of belonging. While for Augé non-places are considered merely transit places – liminal and betwixt – Triebel questions this. For Triebel, non-places are a foundation of migrant communities, a buffer between home and host. The acknowledgement that a place of abode is temporary arguably defines it as a non-place- a place of extended transit before moving on to somewhere else. Triebel (p.100) writes with reference to TCKs that 'geographical notions of home are replaced with psychological, universal, social, spiritual or global

notions of home that can provide the TCK with a different kind of identity, history, community and ultimately meaning. In a sense, non-place is a space beyond place.... Non-place is a transcendent place'. Indeed, it is not hard to imagine that for some TCKs, non-places may offer a source of comfort and even identity-formation, and that perhaps such spaces are not devoid of meaning, but imbued with new meaning and significance – where a variety of trajectories and ideas meet. However, experiences of place, 'anthropological' or non-place, is neither fixed nor universal. As Gregory (2009 p.15) notes:

'For Augé it is the very fact that the non-place is uninhabitable that gives it its defining characteristics. This position ignores the workers within the malls; the security guards, cleaners and retail staff, who have a very different experience of the mall from consumers (likewise the toll collector on a freeway and the receptionist at a motel)'.

The question therefore is, if much of daily life is lived within spaces that, for some, may constitute non-places, do they become something different for those within them? Indeed, international schools like NQIS are not immune to critique as being placeless or non-places:

'students are encouraged to live out in what seems like a cultural safe-haven: as they are continuously reminded of dominant social paradigms (gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, religion, to name a few) and their operational value within an 'imagined international community', the cultural identity of their discourse becomes foreign.. yet also un-English (perhaps a quiet cosmopolitan? a delocalized 'other'? ). They seem to remain dwellers of a cushioned non-place, a cultural contact zone within a larger contact area, for the duration of their studies, and even beyond' (Gligorova, 2011 p.239).

Here, Gligorova is claiming that international education itself becomes placeless and liminal.

## ***2.5 Summary and conclusions***

Clearly the concept of place has a variety of definitions and is a shifting concept in geography and social studies more widely. It is also clear that none of these

meanings, at least in academia, equate simply and directly with the everyday meaning of place as a physical location – a point on the map. Figure 4 (from Taylor, 2009) summarizes how place has been conceived in geography and draws together some of the theory presented in this chapter chronologically and in terms of interaction and reaction.

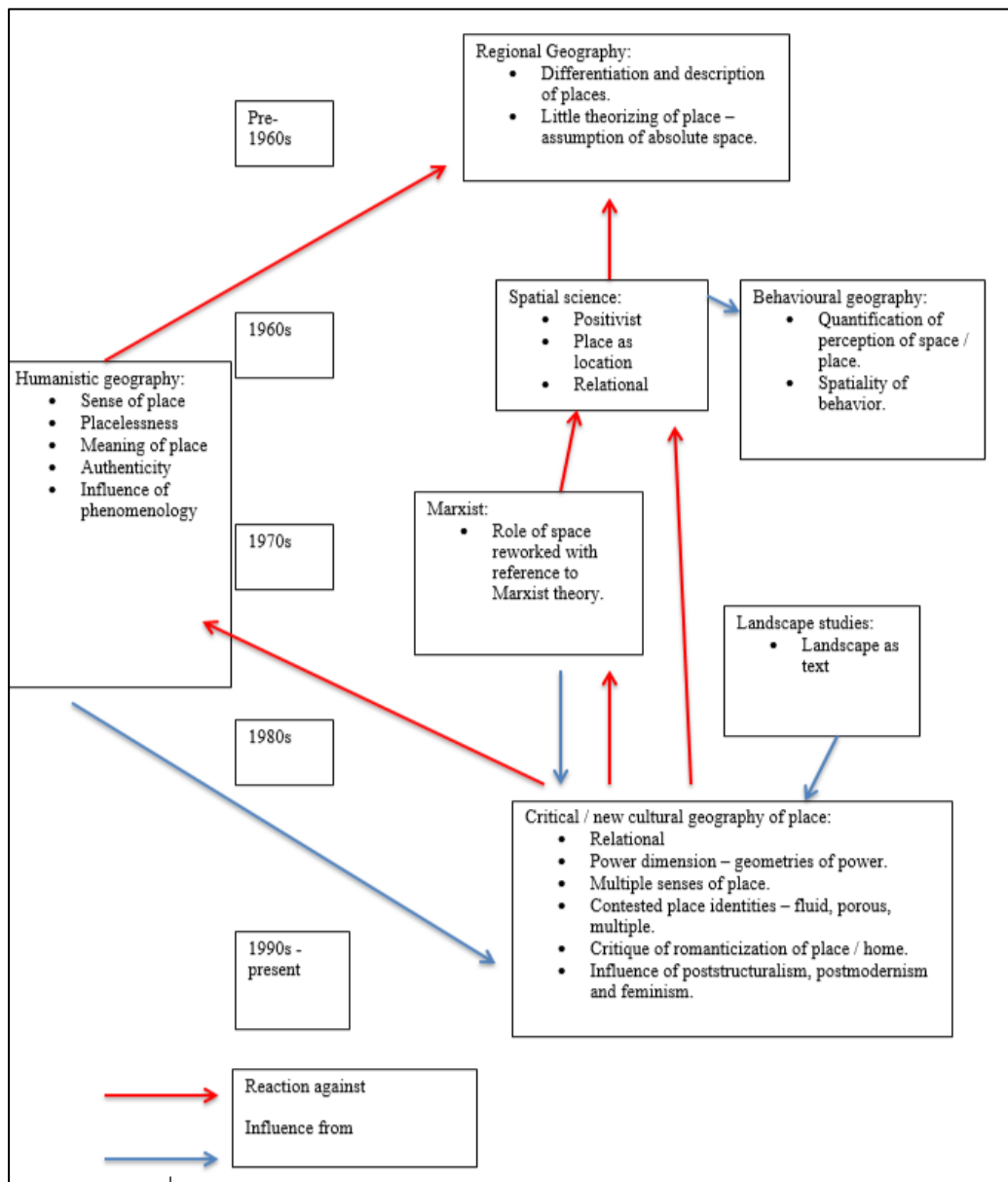


Figure 4: Place in geography – a diagrammatic summary (from Taylor, 2009)

To summarise my views and their significance to this study of childhood place experience, place is constructed when an individual attaches meaning to a physical location, but like Malpas (2000) and Massey (2005) I do not wish to neglect the

physicality of the environment. Similarly, I do not advocate a static understanding of place, nor a singular one, instead emphasizing fluidity, openness, multiplicity, hybridity and change (of place, and thus experiences and perceptions of the environment). After Massey (2005) I have a relational view of place as process – unbounded and negotiated. It is when children attach meaning to the physical location of NQC that place is constructed and experienced, in multifarious ways. When place and the inner self meet there are diverse relationships which are constantly in flux – a negotiated process. It is an emotional relationship dependent on the body, hence the significance of embodied geographies of place – this embodiment of place is even more significant for children who often experience the landscape in more physical ways than adults through outdoor play and exploration (Cele, 2006). This research is focused on childhood experiences of place, so these abstract ideas need to be related to a more physical and corporeal context. Also, these ideas need to be applied to a context beyond words, into the realm of the non-verbal and cognition / experience which is beyond the verbal.

The following chapter builds on this analysis of place, but refocusing on children. Whilst the theories of writers such as Massey and Soja explored in this chapter do not try to explore place for a child's perspective, the following chapter looks at researchers who have looked at space, place and environment through the eyes and lens of the child.

## **Chapter 3: Childhood and children's experiences of the local environment**

In order to examine children's experiences of place, a key starting point is analysing childhood itself, and different concepts of the child. This is because different conceptualisations of childhood lead to different understandings of how children interact with environments and children's agency in these interactions. Meanings of childhood tend to be taken for granted, but it is through critical exploration of concepts of childhood that a fuller understanding of children's experiences of place and can develop. This chapter is split into two distinct but interrelated sections – the first examining concepts of childhood, agency and contributions from children's geographies, the second examining place, childhood and different spaces of childhood.

### ***2.6 Childhood, agency and children's geographies: the nature of growing up***

Exploring the nature of childhoods, to emphasize plurality, in a culturally heterogeneous context such as this research is a complex task, particularly since most of the literature about childhood has originated from Europe and North America. However, a theory of childhood is needed as the foundation for any theory of place experience, or educational theory. Firstly, the developmental psychology approach, defining childhood as staged in a linear progression of cognitive and moral development over time, will be examined, as well as challenges to these ideas.

#### **2.6.1 Developmental psychology and subsequent challenges to developmental theory**

Developmental psychology has been extremely influential in shaping attitudes towards children and childhood since the early twentieth century, including understandings of children's experiences of their surroundings. Developmental psychology emerged at a time when children began to be perceived as being different from adults, as a separate social category with specific needs, in particular protection (Hendrick, 1997). Piagetian developmental psychology (for example 1932) is based on psychological research and empirical observations of children's behaviour. Piaget's more general stage or developmental model of how children

understand their surroundings is summarized in Table 4 (adapted from Walmsley, 1988 in Holloway & Hubbard 2001 p.53).

Environmental information (inputs)		Cognitive processes
<b>Formal operational stage (0 -2 yrs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring own body.</li> <li>• Moving objects (motor action).</li> <li>• Observation of object movement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of body.</li> <li>• Relating movement to self.</li> <li>• Sense of scale / magnitude develops.</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-operational stage (2 – 7 yrs) (Pre-conceptual (2 – 4 yrs) and intuitive (4 – 7 yrs)).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Images from books / TV becomes important.</li> <li>• Extended sensory input – personal mobility.</li> <li>• Start of place exploration via play.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start to represent own place in the world.</li> <li>• Distinction of general and particular object forms.</li> <li>• Development of spatial referencing systems.</li> <li>• Association of particular places with particular behaviours / social actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Concrete operational period (7 – 11yrs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended mobility – beyond home to other spaces.</li> <li>• Involvement in forms of play and sociality in formal and informal settings.</li> <li>• Varied experiences of travel.</li> <li>• Increasing exposure to images of place in education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater detail and precision in mental maps – can estimate distance and direction.</li> <li>• Development of diversified range of place images.</li> <li>• Increased understanding of social rules of place.</li> </ul>
<b>Formal operational period (11+)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual mobility and travel free from constraint.</li> <li>• Increased exposure to images of distant places via formal education and individual interests.</li> <li>• Development of personal place preferences and tastes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally precise mental maps covering extensive area, though lots of variation.</li> <li>• Greater knowledge of distant places.</li> <li>• Ability to apply previously learnt knowledge to different situations.</li> </ul>

*Table 4: How children understand their surroundings (from Piaget & Weil, 1951)*

The end point of developmental psychology is that children progress through universal, linear, natural developmental stages linked to their increasingly complex interactions with their environment, with increasing competence, rationality and complexity (Prout & James, 1990). Children in such a view are seen as being 'incomplete' or unfinished socially. Depending on their age, specific roles are assigned to children in preparation for adulthood dependent on their biological growth. They are part of a family, in many senses outside mainstream society, passive recipients of the socialisation process which takes place at home and in school (James & Prout, 1996). Being viewed as dependent and incomplete serves to justify adult control of many aspects of children's lives, including independent mobility in their local area.

Aries' writing in the 1960s began to highlight some of the insufficiencies of a developmental or contextual theory by clearly stating that childhood should be understood and analysed in terms of its social context (1962). Through analysis of pictorial representations of children in historical artefacts he deduced that in the

Middle Ages children were viewed as 'mini-adults' instead of in terms of difference. Thus Aries suggests that childhood is culturally relative, varying over space and time. Jenks (1996) outlines how during the Enlightenment children started to be perceived as different from adults. Also, different conceptions of children and childhood exist across cultures, thus adding a layer of cultural and spatial heterogeneity to temporal changes. This is the core of the paradigm of cultural politics of childhood (James & James, 2004) referring to a combination of cultural contexts, political and social practices. It is through these that childhood is constructed. There is agreement with Aries theory of childhood from Gergen & Graumann (1996) and Archard (1993) who highlight how Piaget's ideal of adult cognitive competence is a particularly Eurocentric idea. Matthews (1992), for example, argues that children have moral agency, and can develop concepts of right and wrong from an early age.

Clearly children and childhood are contested concepts varying widely between cultures, over time and by researchers. This raises the question, how is childhood understood in this research? Firstly, within a cultural diverse population such as that in the context of this research it is important to remember that within the case, agency-structure relations, concepts of childhood and the roles and expectations of children will vary between families and cultures. Similarly, the expectations of boys and girls will be different, and of children of different ages. It is notable when speaking to younger residents in NQC that for many, childhood is bound up in a complex set of responsibilities towards parents. The rights of children are set against the rights of parents, for example to be obeyed. It is likely that for some children in the study the division between childhood and adulthood is blurred, as they take on 'adult' responsibilities, for example caring for parents or younger siblings. The differences between those who see children and childhood from a developmental psychology perspective, and those who see children and childhood from a social constructivist perspective are great. I argue that viewing through just one of these lenses is limiting – both in terms of trying to understand childhood, but also in informing methodologies.

From a developmental psychology perspective it can be assumed that certain methods and theories of cognitive development fit certain age groups. However, this can be deterministic – the context of each child needs to be considered not just biological age. Even if children follow similar developmental paths, their experiences should be seen from a socio-cultural perspective. Christensen & James (2000, p.176) note '...[children's] social experiences and their relative competences as social

actors must always be contextualized, rather than determined, by the process of physiological and psychological change'. Therefore, in this research I hope to avoid polarizing myself towards either developmental or social constructivist perspectives. As Moore (2004) argues, children should be viewed as both an objective biological reality, and as a socio-cultural construct. Children should not be seen as lacking 'adulthood' and therefore being less than adults. Developmental psychology has a tendency to overlook social factors that create children's realities, whereas sociological / social constructivist perspectives may overlook possible developmental 'facts' about children. When children are viewed as social participants the boundaries between what it is to be a child, vs. an adult, become blurred (Kjorholt, 2004). Children are put into social and symbolic spaces of participation – this allows them to participate in certain areas, but excludes them from others. Indeed, the Convention on the Rights of the Child present two contradictory pictures of childhood: 1) children as objects in need of protection 2) children as active and communicative with rights and the ability to express themselves. However, as Jones (2000) and Mannion (2007) note, children live their lives within the structures of adult space. The structures are material, symbolic and disciplinary – intentional and unintentional – but children have to operate within them. Children can create their own (micro)geographies, and this research aims to uncover these, but these geographies are arguably in turn dependent to a great extent on the structures of adult geographies. The topic of agency is the focus of the next section.

## **2.6.2 Children as social actors and adult restrictions**

The conceptualisation of childhood as, at least in part, socially constructed is significant for this research in a culturally diverse setting. Social constructionism, with its focus on culture, social and historical processes introduces the agency – structure debate, and the significance and plurality of children's every day experiences and understandings of their worlds. Children's agency is manifest through their everyday behaviours and experiences, and also through the structural determinants which shape these behaviours and experiences. Developmental models presented above suggest that children pass through stages of cognitive understanding and behaviours, including spatial awareness and mobility. Understanding this previously dominant discourse is important as it influences how we think about children, and therefore how their lives are structured and restructured over time and space. However, the determinism of developmental understandings of childhood have been challenged by those promoting the importance of social structures (including culture)



and children's agency in shaping their geographic experiences. Following Hackett *et al* (2016 p.x), in this study 'children are understood as cultural producers and social actors in their own right rather than pre-adult becomings, actively involved in shaping their social and environmental transactions at a variety of socio-spatial scales'. Such thinking suggests that while childhood is indeed shaped through relational social structures (age, gender, social class, ethnicity, culture) (Woodhead, 1997; Mayall, 2002) and physical structures, children also play an active role in the construction of their lives and geographies – they are not without agency.

Research in children's geographies tends to focus on socially constructed interpretations of childhood. Research which analyses the ways in which children's agency is evident through their social and environmental experiences, attitudes and behaviours is particularly important. It is only relatively recently that children's active engagement with space, their attachments to place and perceptions of place and their environmental capabilities have been researched. Childhood experiences and practices are understood as constituted through '*spaces of engagement*' where children's agency is foregrounded through social relations, interaction with place, their patterns of play and '*spaces of control*', within which social and physical structures seek to subdue children's agency through techniques of surveillance and regulation (important in NQC where security and boundedness are clear examples of regulation of children's lives and spatial mobility, compounded by restrictions placed by parents or socio-cultural gatedness) (Stevens, 2010). Stevens (2010) argues that it is in the interplay between spaces of engagement and spaces of control across three critical sites – home, public space and the school – that children's mobilities and experiences of place are primarily forged. Fundamentally, the agency that children have to structure their own socio-spatial worlds, and not just being passive subjects who are impacted upon by these, highlights why it is important to explore their experiences and constructions of place. Leading on from this point, if children are competent social actors, then they have the right and the ability to act as participants (Skelton, 2008).

Examples of research that explore childhood agency in child-place interactions include Thomson (2007) who shows through an ethnographic exploration of how primary school aged children engage with the environment at playtime that they use their experiences to develop their understandings of the environment, sometimes in unexpected and innovative ways. In terms of skills developed, Thomson shows that physical engagement with the environment aided developing independence, risk

taking and environmental knowledge. However, such play was under the regulations of adult control. Within formal learning in school Hopwood (2007) found in his case study of Y9 students in the UK that some pupils bring with them their own environmental agendas to learning experiences meaning that 'pupils themselves can imbue learning experiences with an environmental significance where none was intended'. Similar findings have emerged from research on pupils' responses to environmental learning, in terms of how 'learners can be highly individual in their responses to such experiences. The picture emerging is of students as critical consumers, rather than passive recipients, of environmental curricula' (Rickinson, 2001, p.284). These examples show how children can influence their own environmental learning – both in everyday experiences of place and also in the classroom.

Hackett *et al* (2015) also emphasise agency in children's interactions with space and place. They understand agency as being 'recognised in terms of children's navigations and negotiations of their own lived lives but its operation is placed in the context of the intergenerational relationships which are part of their everyday experiences' (p.12). Using Soja's idea of 'spatial justice' they examine spaces where agency is limited by adults. For example, in this study, in a GC, the architecture of the area could limit agency, as could the presence of security staff employed to patrol the complex and prevent behaviours considered deviant. However, agency is also used flexibly by children – subverting the intended use of the space and therefore also the power that is represented in the landscape and architecture. Malone (2007) and Thomson (2007) have both found evidence of children's environmental learning and agency as being restricted by adult interventions. Malone (2007) explores how middle class, suburban Australian parents can restrict children's environmental learning by restricting movement and risk taking. School playgrounds offer children the chance to be outside, but as Thomson (2007) shows, these are often highly controlled environments with clear geographical limits.

## **2.7 Place and childhood: place experience**

The second part of this chapter shifts from debates about the nature of childhood itself and children's agency (although this remains an important consideration), refocusing on the nature of childhood place experience.

Dating back to the 1970s there has been literature in geography that might be best termed children's geographies – that is work focusing on how children's perceptions, opportunities and experiences are socially and spatially structured (Holloway and Valentine, 2000 p.7). A good example of one of the first studies which might be termed children's geographies, exploring place experience, was Bunge's (1973) study which showed how children can be oppressed by the physical built environment. Early research in the 1970s was often quite radical, positivistic or behavioural, for example Blaut and Stea (1971) who explored cognitive mapping. However, humanistic influences and connections to environmental psychology have also been significant, for example in Hart's (1979) research. Feminism and post-modernism have also been influential in children's geographies, where the focus is often on children as an 'othered' and marginalised group. More recently research activity and publications have been most concerned with the ethical issues of research of / with / by children (Valentine, 2000 p.78- 79; Barratt and Barratt Hacking, 2007), as demonstrated by the number of articles in the journal *Children's Geographies* on these topics. Later in the 1980s and 1990s interest in how children and adolescents use public space emerged. The key ideas here can be summarized by 'stranger danger' and the 'youth problem' (Valentine, 1996). As Prezza (2004) notes, the 'youth problem' is frequently resolved through the creation of spaces 'for youth', separating them from wider society. This is certainly true on NQC where there is a dedicated youth centre and several parks including a skate park. Arguably any separation from society will exacerbate problems and sense of community and construction of identity are obstructed. Most recently studies have embraced participatory approaches and the use of visual and place-interactive methods (for example Cele, 2006).

Table 5 summarises key types of research in the geography of children (based on Mckendrick, 2000) and highlights how these are connected and relevant to this study.

Field and focus	Description	Connection and relevance to this study
<b>Field 1: (De)constructing children</b>	<b>Exploring the nature of children / childhood</b>	
Ethical and methodological issues	As research with children, ethics and devising appropriate child-friendly methods are a key focus of studies, e.g. Greene & Hill (2005). Major focus of research and publications in 2000s.	Certainly of significant relevance – explored extensively in Chapters 7 and 8.
Geographical concepts	Using studies of (or with/by) children to reconceptualise key concepts in geography.	Study does apply theory from academic geography to context of children, e.g. Soja's Thirdspace and Massey's conceptualisations of space/place.
Family contexts	Family as key context for children; constraints on children imposed by family; constraints on family because of children.	Emerges in data – role of family and home in experiences of place. Particularly important for Qatari participants.
Society contexts	Exploring interactions between children and adults; impact of wider society on children's lives. Also focus on inequalities in access to environmental experience, for example Day & Wager (2010).	Relationship between children and wider society – mistrust of outsiders, role of security. Different levels of access to wider environment.
Gender variation	How gender impacts experiences of children, e.g. play ranges, freedoms, use of space.	Certainly all relevant and apparent in data, but not major focus of study
Age-based variation	Relationship between age and children's experiences and perceptions (e.g. Rivlin <i>et al</i> , 1973).	
Cultural variation	Impacts of culture on issues such as environmental appreciation, identity formation, use of place (e.g. Matthews, 1992).	
<b>Field 2: Children in the environment</b>	<b>Studies of the relationships between children and environment – physical and social</b>	
Home	Home as significant cultural location for children (e.g. Sebba, 1991), and microspace where life is lived (e.g. Sibley, 1995).	All the elements of the environment are relevant to this study and emerge in children's place experience. The geographical context of a GC in an exurban desert setting is however unique.
School	How school design impacts learning, place of school in society, social processes in schools, school as site of learning for example McKendrick (1999).	
Playgrounds and play environments	Provision of spaces for play (commercial and otherwise), children planning play environments, designing spaces for children and implications here (e.g. Thomson, 2005/2007).	
Neighbourhood geographies	Children's use of space and local area (e.g. Cele 2006), quality of environments (e.g. Homel & Burns, 1987), environment and life chances.	
Street	Street as social space, perceived problems of youth in the street (e.g. Matthews <i>et al</i> , 2000; Cahill, 2000).	
City	Urban childhoods – in specific cities or more generally exploring urbanism. Leisure in the city and children's use of urban space (e.g. Cahill, 2000; Barratt-Hacking and Barratt, 2009)	
Country / rural	Rural childhoods, deconstruction of rural idyll for children, gender and safety in rural areas (e.g. Valentine, 1997; Tucker, 2006)	
Landscapes of consumption	Exploration of the commercialisation of childhood; children as consumers and the landscapes of this consumption (e.g. Mackendrick <i>et al</i> , 2000).	
Cyberspace	Children's experiences of online world; impacts of internet on sense of place / navigation of space e.g. Abeyrathne <i>et al</i> (2011).	
<b>Field 3: Designing environments for children</b>	<b>The role of children in designing spaces – children as planners with voice in decision-making</b>	
Children as planners	How children can contribute to planning environments, especially play environments (e.g. Chawla, 1998).	Less a focus of a study, more of a proposition for the local area based on findings.
Utopian visions	How environments can be improved for children – improving living environments.	
<b>Field 4: Environmental hazards</b>	<b>Analysis of the risks of childhood – real and perceived.</b>	
Traffic, mobility and risk	How independent mobility is often limited by fears of traffic, play ranges, transport patterns, children's journey to school (e.g. Stevens, 2010)	Cars and traffic significant, not in terms of risk (NQC has very strict speed limit and parental concerns here are limited) but in terms of car transport mediating and impacting use, perception and experiences of environment.
Environment and health	Impacts of environment on childhood health; health and quality of life for children.	

<b>Field 5: indirect experiences of place</b>	<b>Role of media and engagement with place (local and distant), e.g. Wiegand (1992).</b>	
Literature	Learning geography through literature, for example Wyse <i>et al</i> (2012)	As a study of local area not a major focus. Indirect experiences of other places (e.g. distant home countries) through internet relevant.
Internet and TV	How various digital media impacts understandings of distant place.	
<b>Field 6: social issues</b>	<b>Encompasses a wide range of studies and social issues affecting children and their personal geographies.</b>	
Children's fears	Both comparative and issues-based studies exist, for example Tarifa & Kloop (1996)	Fears (real and imagined) and deviance / crime are explored in this study, for example how transgression of boundaries is perceived as deviant. Social relations and conflict between children is also noted. Migration is of course a focus since the context of the study is an international school.
Parent's fears for children	Focus here tends to be home parental fears impact children's lives and experiences. Tezel's (2011) study for example looks at parental concerns and fears in context of GC in Istanbul.	
Poverty and deprivation	The geographies of childhood poverty explore issues in a range of contexts – rural, urban, in high- and low-income countries. For example Mizzen and Ofori-Kusi's (2010) study in Accra, Ghana and Panter-brick (2004) who explores child homelessness.	
Work	Most studies of children in the workplace focus on the informal sector in low-income countries, e.g. Abebe's (2007) study of children's employment in Ethiopia.	
Migration	The migration of children and experience of immigrant children is explored by researchers like Dobson (2009). Increasingly research is exploring children as forced and voluntary independent migrants, e.g. Beazley (2015).	
Social hazards	Studies are both comparative and in specific localities exploring issues as diverse as suicide, drug / alcohol use and various forms of abuse. For example Trell <i>et al</i> explore alcohol use by Estonian teenagers.	
Crime	Two main themes emerge in research – use of curfews and crime by children, for example Jeff's and Smith (1996).	
<b>Field 7: citizenship and agency</b>		
Environmental action	Increasingly focused on climate action, as well as local environmental concerns. Lee (2014) examines role of student eco clubs in primary schools.	Like field 3 less a focus, more a proposition for change in research context.
Local politics	Review of global rights and children's participation on larger scales, e.g. city / region. For example Hart's (1992) study of participation of children.	
Interest in environment	Studies such as those by Chawla (1988, 1992) explore children's affordances for environments. Simmons (1994) examines children's preferences for natural environments.	
<b>Field 8: children's geographical knowledge</b>		
Environmental cognition	Mapping abilities, impact of culture on environmental cognition, significant focus on methodologies (e.g. Matthews, 1992)	Methods used in this study like map drawing do draw upon studies of environmental cognition. Environment understood as both physical and social, so some relevance of understanding of physical environment. Theory from studies of distant place (e.g. Picton, 2008; Taylor, 2009) adopted and adapted in study.
Understanding of physical environment	These understandings are constructed through both formal and informal learning. Here the focus is on physical geography – landforms, ecology.	
Understanding of distant places	How children construct and understand distant places. The role of formal and informal learning (e.g. Picton, 2008).	

*Table 5: Summary of important fields of study in the geography of children / children's geographies*

The following section explores models for understanding child-environment interactions. Firstly, ecological frameworks will be examined, because of their understanding of 'environment' as both physical and social, a foundation of this research.

### 2.7.1 Ecological frameworks for understanding child-environment interactions

Ecological frameworks to understand place experience and childhood experiences of the environment emerged as important in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model and Baacke's (1985) subsequent reworking of the model. Barratt Hacking *et al* (2012, p.443) summarize the ecological perspective where:

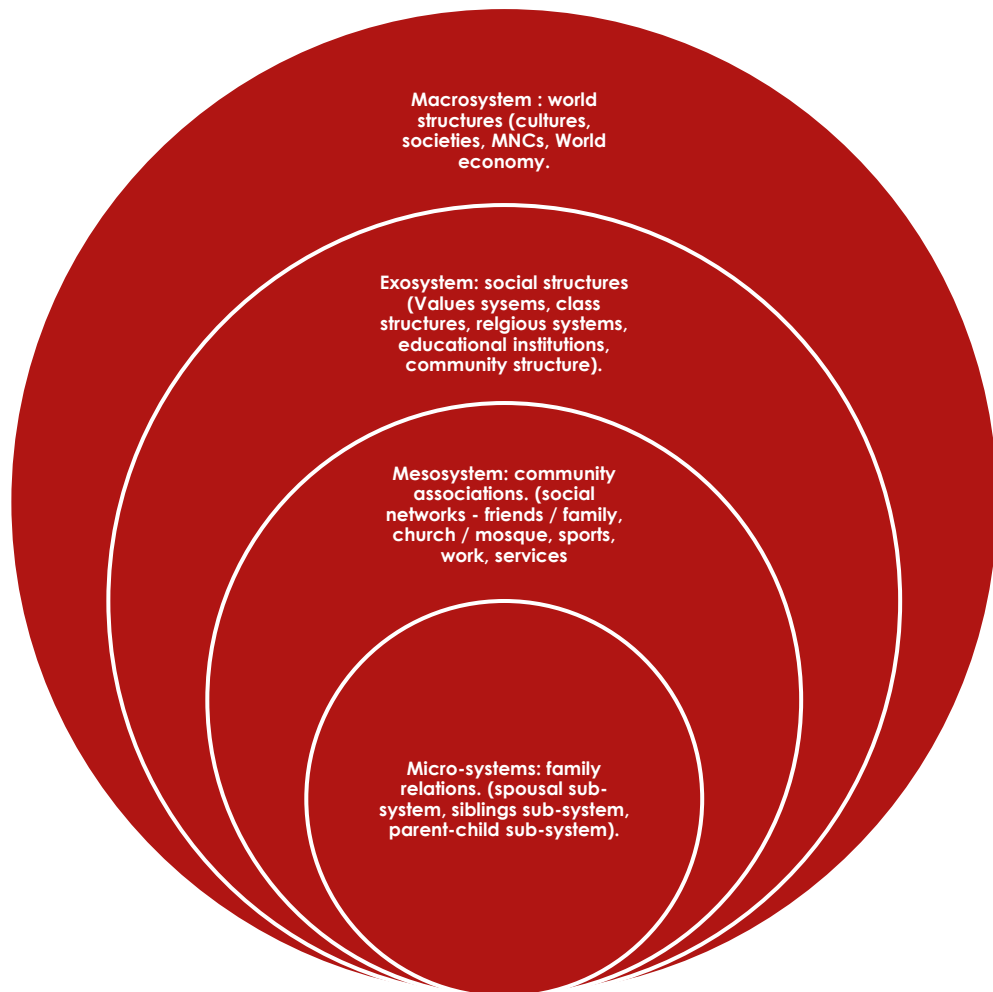
'context and experience are also viewed as significant influences on child behaviour, children's relationship to the world and thus children's development. This perspective views the child within the family, social, environmental and cultural context; it emphasises the significance of the child's everyday experience in physical and social settings in relation to their learning and development'.

According to Ittelson (1973), Walmsey & Lewis (1984) and Rikkinen (2000) consideration of the living environment should include the following aspects:

- Environments do not have fixed boundaries in space / time. Boundaries are created through interaction between people and place.
- Information about environments is multi-sensual, but the visual is probably dominant.
- Environments include both peripheral and central information.
- Environments provide far more information than we can handle and process – much is redundant, contradicts other elements of the environment or is ambiguous.
- Environments are experienced and defined through action – people are always part of the situation in which information is gathered making passive experience of place impossible.
- The symbolic meaning of environments and place is significant, with places imbued with meaning and behavioural norms and expectations.

Clearly environmental experience is a complex transaction between people and the world around them. Initial ecological models explored how the social context of children affects the child's immediate settings (Barker & Schoggen, 1973; Barker 1979). The world in which children live is complex and full of variables – culture,

personality, age and gender, as well as variation in the physical environment. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (see Figure 5) to understand children's living environment differentiates between four levels. Later models highlight how the geographical context of a child influences quality of life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner describes the combined forces as environmental systems. These generalized systems are categorized by proximity and effects on children. These systems can either support or inhibit environmental experience. The ecological approach to understanding children's everyday lives and experiences rests on two premises. The first is that children are deeply intertwined within socio-cultural contexts – where the relationship is transactional. Secondly, that observation and working with children in these everyday contexts can reveal a great deal about their lives. In such an ecological approach, separation of individual and context is not desired, and through methods and observation in context, children's agency becomes visible. However, it is questionable whether, through observation alone, a researcher can access children's experiences and the meanings attached to these, hence the need for multiple methods to uncover these experiences of place and everyday life.



*Figure 5: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model*

Microsystems in the model above refers to the immediate home environment. The characteristics of the home, in particular the freedoms afforded to children in terms of personal mobility, directs early environmental and local place experience. This in turn heavily influences the degree to which a child will know their local area. Mesosystem refers to the wider social environment. The school is a key aspect of this for children, providing some of the first significant social transactions for children outside the home. The exosystem goes beyond this as values, norms and expectations. School and teachers are important in this process. Finally, the macrosystem is the outermost environmental sphere, including the whole world. For TCKs and international schools this sphere is particularly important, and the interconnections between the different spheres is complicated by blurred concepts of local / global.

Baacke (1985) adopts this model to encompass four ecological zones: the ecological centre (home), ecological proximity (neighbourhood), ecological sectors (places

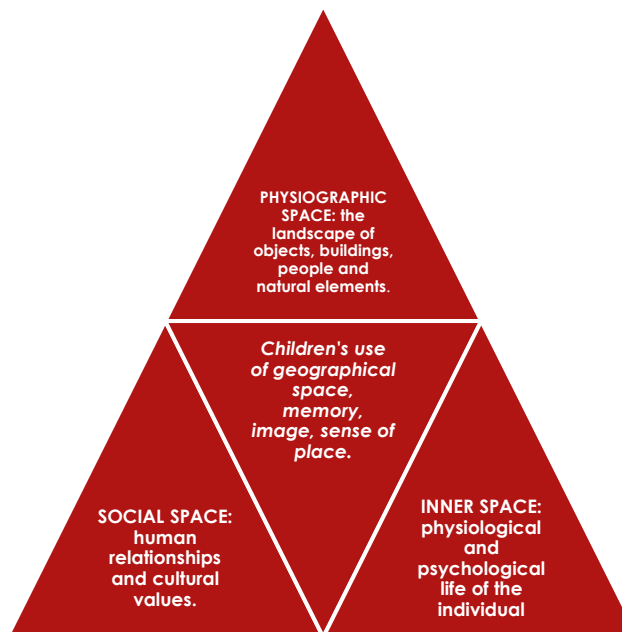


holding specific functions such as play, shopping, school, youth clubs which children frequently visit) and ecological periphery (places infrequently visited such as relatives homes, hospitals). Barratt Hacking *et al* (2012) critique Baacke's model in terms of its universal applicability. While it may apply well in affluent industrialised contexts, it is less applicable, for example, to street children and those living in poverty or geographically isolated locations. Despite this,

'the idea that child development is affected by the child's everyday environment experience has wider relevance. Of particular interest are Baacke's ideas on the way in which the child goes beyond simply experiencing these zones to acting as an agent within them, developing their own meanings through experience and appropriating zones for their own purposes. It is these zones or spaces that contribute to children's learning and development and that children have influence over... In this two-way process children both learn from and contribute to community and social spaces. As 'experts' in these spaces children are agents of change and are therefore able to make important contributions to knowledge advancement through research' (Barratt Hacking *et al* 2013 p.443).

In this sense, the ecological model is useful to consider in this research. Similarly, in the context of this study Bronfenbrenner's model (1979) is useful insofar as it connects local-global interactions which are so strong in Qatar and in children's environmental transactions. However, the social emphasis means that the mechanisms by which children develop understandings of large-scale environments are implied rather than explicit (Matthews, 1992). However, Bronfenbrenner in later writings goes beyond the various layers of context outlined in the diagram. For Bronfenbrenner (1995) context is just one of four aspects of what he articulated as a process-person-context-time model of development and experience. Here, proximal processes make up the interactions 'between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment' (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p.620). As Tudge & Hogan (2005, p.105) sum up: 'proximal processes are the essence of what occurs in the course of everyday activities between individuals, their social partners, and the other important objects and symbols in their environments. A focus on proximal processes necessarily involves dealing with individuals' typically occurring experiences'.

In contrast Moore and Young's (1978, p.83) model (Figure 6) examines how children encounter everyday environments more explicitly in a 'behaviour-environment ecological framework'. They suggest three distinct realms of experience, and that interaction between these realms controls children's use of the geographical environment therefore affecting acquisition of both an image and a sense of place.



*Figure 6: Moore & Young's (1978) behaviour-environment ecological framework*

Both Moore and Young (1978) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) models are useful in order to help grasp the wide variety of factors which affect how children encounter large-scale environments, like neighbourhoods and towns. According to Matthews (1992) the three main organizational factors are physiological / socio-personal characteristics of the child (age, sex, social class, ethnicity, religion), the nature of the geographical environment (for example opportunities for play, weather / climate, whether it is natural or built and its affects upon children's outdoor activities) and finally the societal and cultural context of these child-environment transactions. The following section goes on to explore some of the geographical environments Matthews writes about with reference to children's spaces, places and mobilities.

### 2.7.2 Children's spaces, places and mobilities

This section will explore children's spaces and places, making the distinction between environments *for* children and environments *of* children (Spencer & Blades, 2005 p.1) where 'the environments of children are not always environments for children: in many cases, the places where children grow up, play and learn are, at best, designed for them by adults, at worst they are the spaces left over from the 'adult world'.

A number of empirical studies, mostly qualitative in nature, have explored childhood place experience in a range of contexts (for example Cele, 2006; Roe, 2007; Barratt & Barratt Hacking, 2000, 2007, 2009; Christensen *et al*, 2014; Hart, 1979, 1992, 1997; Blaut & Stea, 1971; Raittila, 2013; Matthews, 1992; Malone, 2003 / 2007). Studies have often focused on the experiences of younger children (in the 6 – 12 age range as opposed to 13 – 14 as in this study). Nevertheless, they are crucial in informing this research in terms of theory and methods, as well as identifying the gap in research which exists in terms of TCK place experiences, and research in the geographical context of gated communities. Table 6 highlights some important studies that have informed this research. It is by no means an exhaustive list of studies of children's place and experiences, but some of the more influential ones, theoretically and methodologically, in this study.

Studies	Children's place experience: key foci and findings
<b>1970s studies: Hart (1979; 1992; 1997), Blaut &amp; Stea (1971), Bunge (1973)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly urban settings</li> <li>• Children's perception of place.</li> <li>• Crucial to involve children in research process: participation (Hart).</li> <li>• Intersection of geography and psychology.</li> <li>• Direct experience important.</li> <li>• Environmental competence (Hart) and independent mobilities.</li> <li>• Influence of parents important.</li> <li>• Child-unfriendly spaces as a product of capitalism (Bunge)</li> <li>• use and experiences of space an outcome of negotiation between child, parent and the environment – agency was negotiated between these points (Hart).</li> </ul>
<b>Matthews, 1992;</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's experience of place – both direct and indirect.</li> <li>• Spatial cognition (and methods for understanding)</li> <li>• Children's environmental competence.</li> <li>• Needs of children in local environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Cele (2006)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research in the UK and Finland</li> <li>• Children experience place and neighbourhoods in different ways to adults.</li> <li>• Children attach different meanings to physical space.</li> <li>• Importance of secret places, boundaries and transgressing these.</li> <li>• One of the first researchers to embrace participatory and visual methods.</li> </ul>
<b>Roe 2007</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural place experience in the UK.</li> <li>• Importance of boundaries and secret places free from adult control.</li> <li>• Transformation of places through changing space.</li> </ul>
<b>Barratt &amp; Barratt-Hacking (2000, 2007, 2009),</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban place experience in UK</li> <li>• Children have powerful knowledge</li> <li>• Children want to contribute to local place-making and decisions about development and change.</li> <li>• Importance of participatory practices when researching with children.</li> </ul>
<b>Malone (2003; 2007):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's experiences of the world increasingly taking place behind closed doors, within enclosed gardens.</li> <li>• Child-friendly cities require participation of children in planning process.</li> <li>• Research in varied contexts: Australia, Cook Islands, Kazakhstan.</li> </ul>
<b>Lim &amp; Barton (2010)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study exploring insideness in urban children's sense of place in New York.</li> <li>• Consider dynamic nature of place, and how insideness changes over time.</li> <li>• Children's construction of insideness in their sense of place is through '1) environmental understanding (i.e., contextualized, comprehensive, and critical understanding of a place), 2) environmental competence (i.e., knowing how to navigate and engage in a place), and 3) diverse, strong affective relationships with a place' (p.328)</li> <li>• Broadly ethnographic and phenomenological, using neighbourhood mapping, autophotography, interviews and walks as methods.</li> </ul>
<b>Raittila, 2013</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment as not precisely determined.</li> <li>• Children experience the physical form of their local environment, as well as social meanings and values.</li> <li>• Interpretation not independent of planned environment – reflect of society's values.</li> <li>• Environment contains range of possibilities, limitations and affordances for children.</li> </ul>
<b>Christensen et al, 2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danish study with 11 year olds in urban context</li> <li>• Developed three analytical concepts of relevance to children's conceptions of place; located social experiences, experiences of the unknown, and children's contested spaces.</li> <li>• Use data to promote physical activity in cities.</li> </ul>
<b>Sander, 2014/2016</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnographic study exploring TCK experiences in Shanghai.</li> <li>• Based primarily on interviews, mental mapping and mind mapping (concept mapping).</li> <li>• Found diversity of experiences of expatriate life.</li> <li>• Notes significance of gated communities for expatriates in Shanghai, and how these are experienced in very different ways by different people depending on culture, age and gender.</li> <li>• Describes challenges of 'gated living' for teenagers, and the importance of boundary transgression for them.</li> <li>• Importance of homes / bedrooms for TCK children and teenagers noted.</li> <li>• Of all studies reviewed, Sander's is most closely related and aligned to this study.</li> </ul>

*Table 6: Selected studies of childhood spaces, places and experiences*

Key spaces *for* children identified in studies not surprisingly include homes, parks, school and streets. Indeed, many note there is a triad of home-school-other spaces. However, while areas such as parks, gardens, play areas are designed for children, often it is other spaces – spaces *of* children - which children attach more meaning to in their exploration of the environment. Similarly, Rasmussen distinguishes between

these as 'children's places' vs. 'places for children'. While a wasteland area may be seen by adults as an inappropriate place for play, for children it may be interpreted very differently (Roe, 2007; Cele, 2006). Similarly, conceptions of school differ between children – as a place of learning, socializing or play. Research suggests that children do indeed prefer wilder, less formalized spaces to play and interact with the environment – so spaces such as wastelands and brownfield sites are more appealing than highly organized spaces such as parks and playgrounds (Ward, 1978; Cele, 2005; Roe, 2007). Cele (2005) and Raittila (2012) note how structures such as walls and railings may be interpreted by adults as restricting mobility, for children they are often seen as not an obstacle to play, but an opportunity. These meanings attached to place and physical structures are fluid and change with time and with maturation. Similarly, in contexts where children enter employment at an early age different experiences emerge. In Sudan, Katz (2004) found the distinctions between work and play were blurred – with play being more 'workful' and work being more 'playful'. Punch (1998), conducting research in rural Bolivia noted that children used space and place as a means to appropriate free time. By taking animals to graze further from their place of residence, they were able to return home later and therefore appropriate more 'free' time.

The importance of public space (streets, squares, public parks), as a childhood space, is emphasized as important for children and adolescents by a number of researchers in varied contexts worldwide. Holland *et al* (2007) assert that it is everyday experiences within public space and the local area which are central to identity formation. Others such as Malone (2002) and Brooks (2006) have emphasized the importance of gathering in public space for teenagers – in places away from the surveillance of parents and teachers. However, as will be shown in this case study, inability to escape surveillance of adults can lead to feelings of being trapped within the community. The importance of direct experience of environments is examined by a number of writers (see, for instance, Barratt Hacking *et al*, 2007; Chawla, 1992; Matthews, 1992; Christensen & O'Brien, 2003). These studies suggest children's experience in the environment – 'through being allowed to meet with or make journeys with friends or alone - is an important factor in the development of their senses of environments and of their spatial capability in navigating their way through and between places' (Catling, 2005 n.p). Table 7 summarizes some of the impacts of lack of local area experience explored by Malone (2007), much of which is supported by the findings of Chawla (2002).

Value	Explanation
<b>Environmental competence</b>	Increased independent experience of environment increases environmental literacy, capabilities and confidence. Complex environments increase these further.
<b>Sense of purpose</b>	Lack of experience of autonomy and independence in exploration of local environment contributes to lack of self-confidence/ self-esteem – children do not develop ideas about their competencies.
<b>Self-worth and efficacy</b>	Lack of choice to experience different privacies / freedoms mean that children have little time to reflect / reinforce feelings of self-worth / efficacy.
<b>Social competence</b>	Lack of opportunities to explore environment limits access to the diversity of people, environments, activities and stimuli cities and neighbourhoods offer – limiting ability to build social capital outside immediate school / home area.
<b>Resilience</b>	Exposure to some risks a challenges acts as scaffolding for the risks / challenges of life. Lack of experience in the neighbourhood restricts opportunities to build resilience.

*Table 7: Value of local environment experience (based on Malone, 2007 p.524).*

However, different children have different degrees of independent freedom and mobility in their local neighbourhoods. Through these experiences *in* places, children build up a *sense of place* (Catling, 2005). Sense of place is understood here as ‘the pattern of reactions that a setting stimulates for a person’ (Steele, 1981 p.12). My own observation in NQC is that *some* children have a high level of independent mobility *within* the compound as parents perceive the area to be safe (only residents are allowed in the compound without invitation, there is a 25km speed limit, high security visibility / presence), but very low spatial mobility *outside* the compound. Children also have a high degree of international mobility, many travelling abroad during holidays. This dislocation between high levels of international mobility, but low day-to-day mobility is striking – a crumpling of space of sorts. However, mobility and *independent* mobility free from adult supervision should not be confused.

Catling (2005) notes that limits to children's free exploration of their local area are increasing, particularly in the West. He cites two key reasons for this. Firstly, the issue of safety in the local environment is key. Concern about road traffic accidents is central here as is 'stranger danger'. In the eyes of many, communities are less likely to look out for other peoples children. A second issue is reduction in accessible places for children to play freely without adult supervision. Demand for space has led to a decline in open spaces in both rural and urban areas. Available space is often commodified into managed play spaces – enclosed and separated from other areas. In most regions there are few if any 'wild' spaces to play, both greenfield and brownfield. In the case of desert countries like Qatar, wild is equated with a somewhat foreboding and bleak environment largely devoid of any life. Understandably this environment is not viewed by many in the region with a great deal of romanticism. While playgrounds and gardens offer children some outdoor play, their safety and security features are seen to inhibit opportunities for

experiencing place. Although the notion of 'wild' areas in the context of residential Qatar is somewhat redundant, there are many playgrounds. Accessible space for children in this context is abundant, but it is highly artificial. For children resident in more urban areas such as Al Khor town and Doha the same issues as those described by Catling (2005) above are relevant.

Such issues are compounded by increasing use of car transportation by children (see Malone, 2007). This is particularly true in Qatar where car ownership is extremely high, and the relative isolation and extreme natural environment means a high dependence on car transport. The use of cars for even short local journeys raises concerns both for children's health (rising levels of obesity associated with lack of physical mobility) and declining experience of the local environment with impacts of spatial understanding of places – something reflected in the data generated from both maps drawn and photovoice.

For Catling two key features emerge from the changes outlined above. Firstly, children have fewer experiences of their local environment and local places, in particular fewer experiences of free exploration of such areas. Secondly, a growing perception of children being 'in' / 'out' of place in certain places is developing. Teenagers in particular are prone to be seen as 'out of place' or threatening in certain places (and at certain times). Similarly, the gating of children's play areas in parks separated from the wider area, has led to a territorialization of children's space. In NQC this is articulated by the security patrols who regularly move children on from non-designated play areas. Yet while these changes in children's direct experience of places are having an effect in the Western world, this is not necessarily the case across the globe, where in some societies children seem to retain greater freedoms (Chawla, 2002). The following section examines how 'experience' is understood in this study of children's place experience.

### **2.7.1 Conceptualising experience and place experience**

This section is split into two parts, the first exploring what is understood by 'experience' as internal, embodied and socially mediated, the second exploring different aspects or components of place experience identified in literature. This is important to explore, since this study is lexically framed within the concept of environmental / place experience.

### 2.7.1.1 Understanding experience and methodological considerations

The word experience is used in this study of child-environment interactions because of its all-encompassing nature. Ways of framing understanding the world (see 1.6), like perception, understanding, construction or imagination are all foregrounded in experience of the world. However, while the all-encompassing nature of 'experience' is attractive because of its ability to capture many elements of environmental interaction, it is a hard term to pin down a precise meaning for. Defining experience is a complex task as experience is preceded by consciousness. Many definitions of experience present it as being the subject of a state / condition or the effects of an event (Greene & Hill, 2005). Green and Hill (2005 p.5) write that:

'Experience is about interpretation, on the part of the self to the self (as in reflexive mental processes) and on the part of the self to others (as in attempts to communicate experience) and, further, on the part of the others as they attempt to understand the original experience. The latter exchange has been encompassed in the term 'intersubjectivity', that process which occurs in exchange between two or more subjectivities'.

This process is important to consider, since it has implications for both how children experience place, but also how I as a researcher try to understand these experiences. These experiences are further complicated by sociocultural viewpoints on the construction of the self where 'children come to think of themselves as selves and interpret their encounters with self, the world and others in very different ways depending on the discourses that are dominant in their culture' (ibid. p.4-5). Socio-cultural perspectives on the construction of self are relevant in this study, in particular how our relationship with and experiences of the world is a function of cultural context, especially discourses which structure our place in the world. Greene and Hill (2005, p.4 – 5) note 'children come to think of themselves as selves and interpret their encounters with self, the world and others in very different ways depending on the discourses that are dominant in their culture'. In Western cultures, according to Greene & Hill (2005), observers of children tend to assume that their activities and verbalizations are products of, or at least connected to their experience(s). Understandings of experience now tend to see it as something socially mediated, and therefore to some extent shared with other people rather than something entirely private – 'experience is interpretative and the medium by which humans interpret



their encounters with the world is linguistic or at least symbolic' (Greene & Hill, 2005 p.5). This has implications for the findings of this study, insofar as it is important to examine both the uniqueness of child-place interactions, and how these are shared by different children. Discourses must be noted as important in creating meaning, but to see experience as constituted entirely from discourse negates the physical or material foundation of some forms of experience. Indeed, the sensational foundation of experience is arguably extremely important for children who often interact with the environment in a more tactile way than adults (Cele, 2006).

However, the nature of experience is such that arguably it is always in part inaccessible to outsiders, since experience is internal. Thus, to borrow from post-structuralism, any account of experience like that in this study must be accepted as partial and imperfect, never fully capturing the nature of things as they 'really are'. Indeed, one's own experiences are not always fully understandable, so to try and fully understand the experiences of others, particularly children, is arguably impossible. With young children this is particularly problematic as they are often unable to report their conscious encounters with the world. But if it is acknowledged that children have important and interesting things to express about their experiences and lives, then finding ways to explore these is not a futile task, especially with reference to their lived experiences of environments and place. Understanding of children's experience of place can then be used to *improve* these experiences.

#### **2.7.1.2 Understanding *place* experience**

In the broadest terms, experience of place can be split into two main elements of environmental interaction / sources of information – direct (through residence, play, embodied interaction with the physical environment) and indirect (through the media, communications, education), this more bound in culture and discourse. In this study it is children's direct experience of their local environment that is of central concern. Place experience can be further broken down into immediate embodied experience (perception and sensory experience) and more internal, cognitive and learned aspects and processes of place experience (for example place identity and place attachment).

According to Cele (2006, p.37):

‘when we react with place, our feelings, memories and thoughts are continuous reactions to objects, people and place itself. This multi-dimensional experience is something that characterizes all human experiences and perceptions. We combine our sensuous impressions, personal preferences, social life and cultural identity with the memories and wishes that different places or objects bring out from within us’.

For Cele, interactions, experiences and perception of the physical environment is abstract, unknowable, untouchable and sometimes even unexplainable (2006). It is not always experienced on a cognitive level, but also within our bodies. It is therefore unapologetically subjective:

‘Our everyday places, our childhood places and our most beloved places rest as embodied knowledge within us. Our bodies tell us what the ground feels like beneath our feet, where the snow melts first in Spring, where cars drive too fast, and which loose paving stones to avoid. Mostly, this is not knowledge that is possible to bring to an intellectual level when we wish to. This is tacit knowledge, which we are not even aware of, the kind of knowledge our bodies collect for us when we interact with a place frequently or intensely enough. It is preserved within us and only brought to light in the right context’. (Cele, 2006 p.9).

Thus, communicating place experiences is place-bound and best done ‘in-place’. Children tend to interact with places with their bodies more than adults (Christensen, 2003; Harju, 2013; Rasmussen, 2004). It is socially acceptable for children to touch and feel things more – to lie on the grass, to hit and poke – even taste. These activities are fun and exciting. As we interact and perceive place these memories can be very long-lasting. For many writers the human self is created in meeting and interacting with place (Tuan, 1977; Matthews, 1992; Manzo, 2005). Place is not just about physical structures, it is also about social and cultural structures which load places with meaning, feelings and significance. Children create bonds with places which are extremely strong. However, it is speculated that for TCKs, bonds to physical places are weaker than for children who are less geographically mobile.

Instead, bonds to people, in particular friends and family, are stronger and more important in defining whether a place is special / significant – the notion of place significance being constructed by social relations is echoed in much of the literature in environmental psychology. Understanding how children create bonds with places is key for this study, and should reveal how they relate to the physical, social and cultural structures of place.

As well as the broad categories of place experience outlined above – direct and indirect; embodied and cognitive – a number of writers have tried to conceptualise the various elements of place experience, for example Lim & Barton (2010) who highlight ten key aspects of place experience summarised in Figure 7.

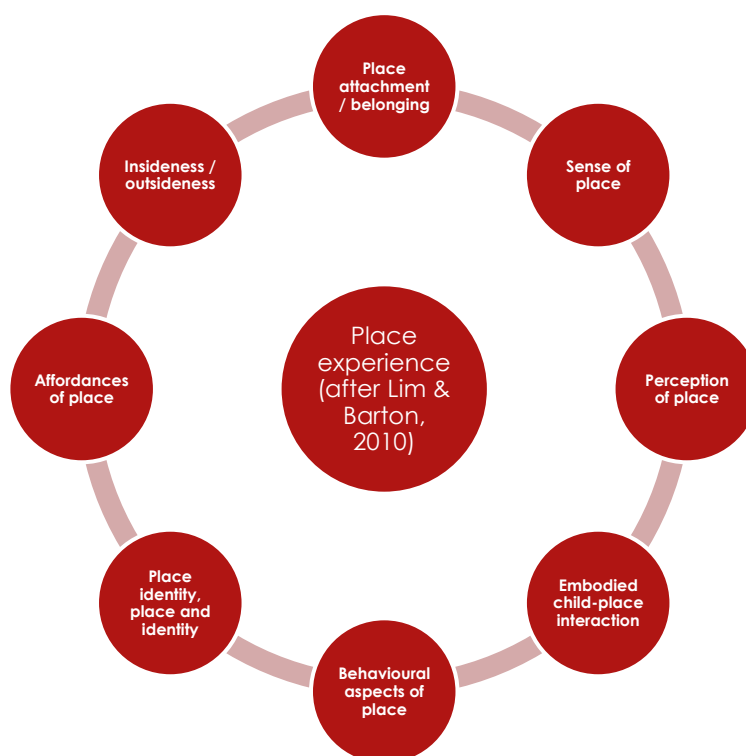


Figure 7: Ten key aspects of place experience identified in literature

With reference to Figure 7, the key concerns in this study are arguably embodied child-place interaction, affordances of place and senses of insideness and outsideness. Hackett *et al* (2015) also provide a useful conceptual framework from which to explore children's experiences. Their book, *Children's Spatialities: Embodiment, Emotion and Agency*, emphasises the three lenses, suggested in the title, through which children's lives and spatial experiences can be explored. They

ask, like Tuan (1977) and Cele (2006), are children's experiences of place more **embodied** than adults? In what ways does place (and bodies) impact children's **emotional** lives? How does the social production of space, in Lefebvrian terms, give potential for **agency** in this process of production? From this we can understand place experience as embodied, as emotional and as bound in agency-structure negotiations. Hackett *et al* also develop five core concepts (p.5-6) related to place experience and the co-production of space:

- the 'ongoingness' of space: understood as the 'unfolding production of space as closely tied to the formation of children's identities'. Space and identity are in this sense constantly under a process of renewal and remaking through social interactions, tacit knowledge, imagination and ideology. Lim and Barton (2010) describe this as a 'transactional' conceptualisation of child-environment interactions emphasising ongoingness, change and the dynamic nature of sense of place- as something that is never a 'final product'. Massey (2005) describes this as 'place as process', focusing on how the local is forged from encounters with a global space of flows.
- the 'betweenness' of spatial experience – how space and place both enables and constrains actions of children, and how children's knowledge and understanding of how action is impacted 'come from the betweenness of spatial experience, where children bring knowledges generated through their familiarity with one setting into those which are unfamiliar' (p. 6).
- the symbolic / tacit meanings children attach to space where 'children's ways of knowing as going beyond spoken or written knowledge, to include what is remembered or imagined by the body as well as the mind, and to a certain extent, is therefore unshareable and unknowable' (p.5), reminiscent of Cele's writing.
- how 'matterings and their felt intensities' (i.e. that places *matter*) differ from adult experiences of place – and that these are political and ideological – with significant constraints on how children interact with space.
- how children subvert the controlling influences of adults over space and are part of the process of the social construction of space. They ask how processes of conceiving and perceiving space might be different for children than adults, and implications therein.

Many of these themes and concepts emerge as important in this study in how children experience their local area, in particular the ongoingness of place and how children use space subversively.

Discussion so far has explored place and the environment mostly as tangible emphasising the embodied nature of experience. The following discussion explores a different kind of space – that of virtual or online space. This is in order to better understand how many children's lives are lived through both through the physical and emotional spaces outlined already (homes, schools, public space) and also less tangible digital spaces.

### **2.7.2 Virtual spaces of childhood**

Cyberspace, the digital and online, features in children's experiences of place in this study. This raises questions about how digital spaces should (can?) be conceived as part of place experience. The language used to describe the internet is awash with spatial metaphors and binaries – real / virtual *space*, *cyberspace*, information super*highway*, *networks* – so it is unsurprising spatial theorists have pioneered much of the research into this 'space' (Graham, 1998) and how it is experienced. The children in this study were born into a technologically advanced society, and are the first generation to use ICT from a very young age, at school, at home and using mobile internet devices in those ubiquitous 'inbetween times'. Increasingly literature is exploring the impact of children's use of ICT and the internet on identity and social relations (see for example Abeyrathne *et al* 2011). However, the impact of use of such technology on issues of concern in this study - spatial awareness, place experience, communication, sociality, sense of place, understandings of home to name a few - is still an emerging field of study despite many theorists being interested in the interactions between the online and offline and the spatiality of cyberspace.

A dilemma here is how to conceptualize the concurrency of being 'online' and being physically situated 'offline', and also where 'cyberspace' fits into distinctions between local and distant place, if it is a space or place at all. Indeed, 'cyberspace' is not a place we go to when online. A group of teenagers in a physical space (for example a park, street, bedroom or school), connected to each other using Twitter or Snapchat via smartphones, challenges the division of offline / online. Communication can be simultaneously be online and offline in such a situation – sharing of images, location

and text is almost instantaneous with those near and far. When we use the internet we are materially located, and the very infrastructure we use to 'enter' cyberspace is material (phones, servers, cables, routers). In this sense the online is very much materially present in the offline world. Here it may in fact be useful to breakdown the binary of offline / online, virtual / real, instead viewing such situations as quasi-online / quasi-offline, and that being connected is simply now part of being 'in place'. A future of virtual reality will, of course, further challenge these understandings considerably.

Empirical research connecting ICT use and place experience focuses on ICT limiting children's use of outdoor space (Subrahmanyam *et al* 2000), how GPS mapping can be used in research (Mikkelsen & Christensen, 2009; Christensen *et al*, 2011) and how the impact of GPS technology on mobile devices is also significant for children's spatial understanding / spatial memory (de Souza e Silva, 2013). TCK use of online social networks (OSNs) is explored by Collett (2014), a topic developed in 9.2.13. Holloway & Valentine (2002 p.318) explore the relationship between children's online and offline interactions. They focus on how the 'virtual' is incorporated into the 'real' and vice versa, as well as exploring notions of public and private space online (Figure 8). This is a useful way to consider the offline-online divide, by focusing on interactions between the two.

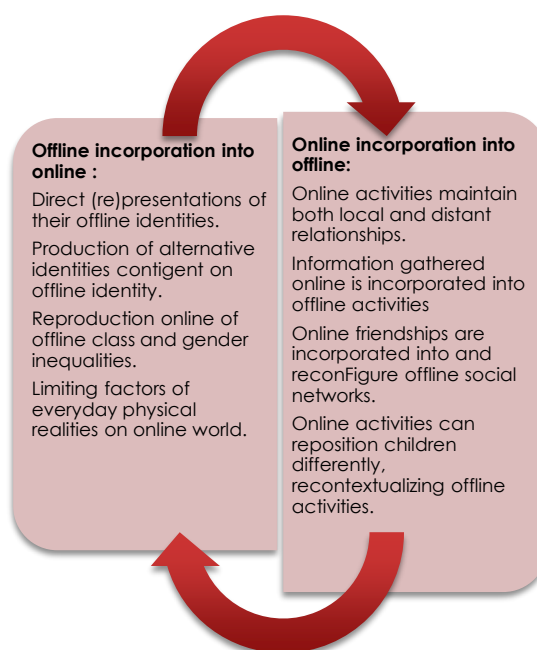


Figure 8: Online and off-line interactions

The central challenge for this study is whether to consider virtual space to be a part of the 'local environment' at all – a tangible and experienced space of sorts - and in a large part this will be dependent on how the children themselves conceive digital space in their everyday lives and negotiations of place. At this point perhaps the best conclusion with reference to space / place and information technology interactions is that 'only by maintaining linked, *relational* conceptions of both new information and communications technologies and space and place will we ever approach a full understanding of the *inter-relationships* between them' (Graham, 1998 p.181 own emphasis added). With emphasis on the relational we have a perspective therefore that 'reveals how new technologies become enrolled into complex, contingent and subtle blendings of human actors and technical artefacts, to form actor-networks (which are sociotechnical 'hybrids'). Through these, social and spatial life become subtly and continuously recombined in complex combinations of new sets of spaces and times, which are always contingent and impossible to generalize' (ibid. p.167).

## **2.8 Summary and conclusions**

This chapter has explored two key interrelated areas of interest – concepts of childhood and child-place interactions. This interrelation emerges from how children's experiences of place have changed significantly over time, and how these changes are in part because of how children and childhood is constructed over time and space. In this study children are not viewed as somehow less than adults, rather as different to adults – in their needs from and use of environments. The chapter explored important issues of agency and how to conceptualise 'experience', both with methodological implications. The diverse spaces and experiences of childhood are clear, including the complexities of how digital space is impacting how young people experience 'physical' and traditional social space. The following chapter focuses in on the educational context of this research in an international school.

## Chapter 4: International Schools, their students and place interactions

What is clear from my discussion of place as conceptual framework in Chapter 2 is that complexities of place and experiences of it have led to a variety of different conceptualizations of place as *concept*. Construction of a concept such as place requires generalization *between* different instances, leading to a mental prototype of the phenomenon (Murphy, 2002).

As explored in 1.6, in many senses international schools and the experiences of TCKs are bound up in complex negotiations of place and environments. Place is significant for international school students on a personal level as many are deeply connected to multiple significant places. They also experience high levels of spatial mobility, and occupy spaces which are familiar, unfamiliar, known and unknown. Moving into schools and classrooms, place is a key concept in education and curriculum – it is explicitly written about in the English National Curriculum for Geography and International Baccalaureate, as one of the key concepts in the MYP across all disciplines. Specifically, ‘Time, space and place’ is one of the 16 MYP key concepts across all subject areas: ‘the intrinsically linked concept of time, place and space refers to the absolute position of people, objects and ideas. Time, place and space focuses on how we construct and use our understanding of location (“where” and “when”) (IBO, n.d). While globally mobile parents and their employers make choices about places to live and visit, teachers make choices about places of study. Children make everyday choices and negotiate environments.

This chapter is split into two distinct sections – 4.1 and 4.2. The first explores the connections between local environments, place and schools within three contexts: place-based practices or PBE, place in the (written) curriculum and school embeddedness in places. The second section shifts the focus to children in schools themselves, specifically international school students, and their relationships with place, focusing on contributions from place attachment theory, place identity and research exploring concepts of ‘home’.



### **3.1 Schools and place(s)**

In this section, place and the local environment in relation to schools is explored in the following three interrelated ways:

1. **Practical pedagogies of place:** the role and potential of place-based education, place-situated pedagogies, place conscious education and how place is negotiated in the curriculum. Learning about place is understood here as a 'negotiation' (Taylor, 2009b). Therefore, it is appropriate to talk of negotiation of place or negotiation of the environment. Negotiation is understood both as a passing through of place, signalling interaction with the environment and the challenging action of learning, and as a discussion, insofar as place experience is viewed as constructed, involving dialogue in constructing shared or conflicting experiences, perceptions, and representations.
2. **Curriculum places:** essentially the landscape and topography of place in the (written) curriculum itself, and different conceptualisations of place in education, linked to different ideologies (see Appendix 3 which explores these ideologies).
3. **School embeddedness in environments** (physical and social; local and global): school interactions and interconnections with the wider local environment and community, as enmeshed in the bundle of trajectories that make up place. International schools often engage with place, environments and communities on multiple scales – nearby (for example through fieldtrips and local language learning) and much more distant, for example through membership of regional school organisations and sporting events. Ideologies of community embeddedness are likely to impact both 1 and 2 above.

Firstly, the key principles of PBE will be explored. Specific implications of, and proposals for, PBE in international schools are examined further in Chapters 10 and 11.

### 3.1.1 Practical pedagogies of place - place-based education

A broad interpretation of PBE is adopted as learning where 'lived experience of a local environment and community is a starting point for inquiry into the instability of meaning attributed to an always already mediated experience of the local' (Ruitenberg 2005 p.213). The power and value of PBE lies in how it can address 'contextualizing knowledge and by resisting imperialist and homogenizing forces of globalized culture' (ibid.). For TCK teenagers, potentially alienated by their wider local community, this has a great deal of potential. PBE is at its core about 'experience', placing emphasis on hands-on, real-world learning experiences. As a strategy for learning it has been linked to increased academic achievement, helping students develop stronger ties to their communities, enhancing students' appreciation for the natural world, and creating a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens (Sobel, 2004). It is also linked to positive school outcomes, notably improved discipline (Falco 2004, Lieberman & Hoody 1998) and improved school attendance (SEER, 2000).

Ormund (2013) identifies eight key features of PBE:

- 1) It is locally based – the local provides the context and substantive basis of learning.
- 2) It is student-centred – learners construct knowledge as opposed to passively consuming knowledge (constructivist).
- 3) It is experiential / inquiry-based.
- 4) It is interdisciplinary.
- 5) Teachers are viewed as facilitators, not authorities.
- 6) Connections to community is genuine and physical.
- 7) Learning outcomes are broad.
- 8) Curriculum and learning integrates place, self and others. It is broad in terms of environmental, economic and social exploration of place, and is multigenerational and multicultural.

As Sobel (2004, p.9) notes, 'One of the core objectives is to look at how landscape, community infrastructure, watersheds, and cultural traditions all interact and shape each other'. PBE is a reaction against what is perceived as 'placeless' curricula, decreasing outdoor experiences for children and decreasing attachment with nature.

The assumption of PBE, rather like bioregionalism, is that rootedness and attachment to place is preferable to placelessness or weak place attachment, a humanistic understanding of boundedness and the importance of 'home'. The importance of nature in PBE is central, although PBE is not exclusively reserved for educational experiences in the 'wild', and does include the neighbourhood and urban exploration. The complication in the context of Qatar in terms of place-based practices is twofold – firstly the physical harshness of the local natural environment and secondly the significance of 'unnatural' (as in human-maintained and created) outdoor spaces in daily life (parks, grassy areas). These spaces are fundamentally 'unnatural' in a desert environment, yet are preferred spaces of recreation for residents rather than the natural desert landscape. While recreation in 'wild' regions exists in the harsh desert climate of the Arabian Gulf, this is often in the form of off-road driving and quad biking – neither of which fit typical PBE activities because of their damage done to the natural environment.

Indeed, PBE in literature appears to focus on place-interactive education in a) 'Western' contexts and b) temperate environments – woodlands and wetlands in particular, therefore neglecting the environmental and social realities of many regions of the world where somewhat romanticised ideas of getting children 'out' into the environment is not always straightforward for environmental, social and safety reasons. For example, in my current place of residence and work, Johannesburg, PBE in the sense of off-campus learning is an immensely complex task in terms of safety, especially in urban contexts, requiring security teams and a huge amount of pre-planning and contingency plans. Many other international schools share these challenges. This doesn't however mean PBE cannot be introduced in the classroom and NQIS does run a small number of desert-based outdoor experiences both as part of the geography curriculum and for outdoor education.

David Gruenewald's (2003a, 2003b) articles about place in the curriculum focus on a more critical pedagogy of place. Place, as a concept and physical reality, for Gruenewald is 'profoundly pedagogical... as centres of experience, place teaches us about how the world works, and our lives fit into the spaces we occupy. Further, places make us: as occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity and our possibilities are shaped' (2003b p 647). Somerville (2008) proposes a new pedagogy of place taking Gruenewald's ideas of decolonization and reinhabitation, but with a renewed focus on moving away from binary constructions of thought, something my own previous research (Picton, 2008) proposes as necessary

when exploring place with children in schools. For Gruenewald, 'A critical pedagogy of place... involves firstly learning to live well socially and ecologically (reinhabitation) and secondly, recognising and changing ways of thinking that prevent us living well in our total environments (decolonization)' (in Preson, 2015 p.46) - being able to identify thinking 'that injure and exploit other people and place' (Gruenewald, 2003b p.9). 'A postcolonial pedagogy of place moves beyond deconstruction in an attempt to articulate how to create something new from the space between binary oppositions' (Somerville, 2009 p 8). This reconceptualization has three key principles summarized in Table 8, where the influence of the place politics of her home, Australia, are clear to see. However, the complexities of negotiating concept of 'indigenous' and 'non-indigenous' (and hybrid) stories of place is useful to consider in a TCK context.

Principle	Key ideas
<b>Our relationship to place is constituted in stories and other representations</b>	This principle asserts that stories are the primary unit of meaning, and way we make sense of the world. Here, story refers to a range of representations – artistic and more scientific. It is proposed that dominant colonial storylines of place require deconstruction as part of the process of decolonisation and that these stories of place depend on the suppression of alternative stories that co-exist – 'the concept of story and storylines can be used reconstructively to seek out previously invisible place stories, or to generate new stories about place' (Somerville <i>et al</i> 2009 p.9).
<b>Place learning is necessarily embodied and local</b>	Linked to the above, embodied connections to place are necessary to learn about place. Drawing upon feminist theorizing about the body and subjective experience and Soja's (2000 p 361) assertion that 'the space of the human body is perhaps the most critical site to watch the production and reproduction of power' it is necessary to embrace the materiality of place. In her own research with Aboriginal communities in Australia Somerville (2009 p.9) writes about shifting ontology of place where 'place learning that derives from a deep, embodied sense of connection gives rise to a different ontology, an ontology of self becoming-other in the space between self and a natural world, composed of humans, non-human others, animate and inanimate; animals and plants, weather, rocks, trees'.
<b>Place is a contact zone of cultural contestation</b>	Local place, as both material and metaphysical, are in-between spaces for the intersection of multiple and contested stories. This becomes particularly important where there are multiple stories of place – for example from different migrant groups. The term 'contact zone' draws upon Bhabha (1994), where hybridity and the production of third space is emphasised.

*Table 8: Somerville's (2009 p.8-9) 'new' pedagogy of place*

The field of PBE is not an uncontested one, and different terminology and positions are clear in writing. For example, terms like 'place-conscious' or 'place-situated' pedagogies are sometimes used (Kitchens, 2009) in lieu of 'place-based'. PBE explored above is contrasted now with two connected and important pedagogies for this study: critical pedagogies in a general sense, and critical pedagogies of place more specifically. Table 9 summarises some of the key relations between these strategies and ideologies, based on MacDonald & Palsdottir (2013, p.59).

Place-based education (place-conscious, place-situated)	Critical pedagogy	Critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003)
Approach is ecological where culture is framed in ecological systems. Emphasis on learner's place.	Sociological approach to pedagogy growing from Paulo Freire's politicisation of education	An interdisciplinary approach to place – blurs boundaries between environment, society, politics.
Local social action – importance of real world context. Learner as inhabitant as opposed to resident. Community interactions and benefits emphasised.	Time and space emphasised in experience and learning – the contextual specificity of geographical context (spatially and temporally).	Broadly 'think global, act local' – experience in local environment can stimulate social action. Connects local to global, e.g. climate change, globalisation or urbanisation. 'Insists that students and teachers actually experience and interrogate the places outside of school – as part of the school curriculum – that are the local context of shared cultural politics' (Gruenewald, 2003 p.9). Place-specific ties between education, culture and the environment.
Examines real place of inhabitation; often intergenerational.	Power geometries investigated. Focus on interrelationships between culture and place.	Examines interactions between ecosystems and cultures.
Participatory with a broad aim to restore places which are disrupted.	Learning recognises disruption and explores its causes. Raising of consciousness of learners.	Acknowledges necessity of disruption and causes, also calls for restoration.
Firmly rooted in place. Develops empathy for people and place.	Change – sometimes revolutionary. Transformation a goal.	Cycles of continuity and change frame human experience.
Reinhabitation of place and local environment. Reinhabitation is 'identifying, affirming, conserving, and creating those forms of cultural knowledge that nurture and protect people and ecosystems' (Gruenewald, 2003, p.9).	Decolonising – reflecting on the space of inhabitation. Decoding / deconstructing own experience by exploring contradictions.	Human experience is political experience. These experience are in flux – decolonisation to reinhabitation.

*Table 9: contrasting PBE, critical pedagogies, critical pedagogies of place and case study*

Further contesting of concepts of PBE have come from writers like Malone (2016) and Ruitenberg (2005). Malone (2016 p.53-4) has critiqued, from a broadly posthumanist perspective, current understandings of place-based practices and children's interactions with nature, and place more generally, for sustaining nature-culture binary understandings and for being anthropocentric. Here Malone 'decentres' anthropocentric and romantic views of 'reinserting' children in nature, instead analysing the complex interactions between children and the 'more-than-

human' world. The exceptionalism of humans is challenged by Malone in favour of viewing humans as part of nature rather than separate from it. Other critiques have also emerged, critically examining concepts of 'local', and the privileging of the local in PBE, for example in Ruitenberg's (2005 p.218) conceptualisation of a 'radical pedagogy of place':

'A radical pedagogy of place is a pedagogy of "place" under deconstruction, a pedagogy that understands experience as mediated, that understands the "local" as producing and being produced by the trans-local, and that understands "community" as community-to-come, as a call of hospitality to those outside the community. In a radical pedagogy of place, students are taught to see the multiplicity of and conflicts between interpretations of a place, the traces of meanings carried by the place in the past, the openness to future interpretation and meaning-construction. A radical pedagogy of place does not pretend to offer answers to or "correct" interpretations of hotly contested places.'

The critique of the 'local' here is significant, in a time when local / global / indigenous / non-indigenous / hybrid forms are blurred. Concepts of 'local' are certainly challenged by TCKs and transnationalism, where the 'hereness' of the local is inevitably 'contaminated', to use the words of Ruitenberg, by the 'thereness' of the non-local because of globality:

'The only reason I perceive my locality as local is because it is not fully present to and in itself, because it is marked by a discourse which comes from more distant places. Rather than teaching students to value the familiarity of the local and fear the unfamiliar of whatever lies beyond, I believe it of more value to show students how all that seems familiar carries traces of the unfamiliar, and vice versa' (Ruitenberg, 2005 p.217)

This certainly resonates Massey's (2005) view of place as relational and as a nexus. It is hard therefore to separate place and relational space. Where a relational and fluid approach is adopted, it is argued that a richer view of place emerges, as opposed to an absolute or relative views – where place is defined and made by their 'outsides' as much as by their 'insides'. Distinctions between people and place are

also nicely resolved by Massey in her global sense of place with 'bundle of trajectories' where the mix of people (and absence of people) and interaction with physical space and objects is an integral part of place. This brings Massey's theorizing back to the more relevant scale of educational research. Here we can apply her ideas to the context of PBE, where emphasis on the local and bounded must not preclude a relational understanding place – where if place is a 'collection of stories', place-based education should be a reading of these stories reminiscent of Somerville's conceptualisation of our relationship to place as constituted in stories and other representations. However, as the next section will explore, place is more often viewed in curricula in more foundational terms, as location, as a point on the map, although this is rapidly changing.

### **3.1.2 Curriculum places and place in the curriculum**

Place and the local environment are in many ways embedded in curricula, in particular geography curriculum. Teachers choose places to study in many subjects, and spatiality is impacting subjects outside its traditional realm of the Humanities, in English, Science and the arts. In terms of place in geography curricula, The English National Curriculum for geography is particularly useful to explore, and relevant to this study since it is the framework followed by NQIS.

Place was a key concept in the QCA 2007 Key Stage 3 (KS3) curriculum adopted at NQIS at the time of study. Going further back to provide some context, the 1999 curriculum (DfES / QCA, 1999) had more prescribed content, both with reference to distant and local places. Place was understood as location, containing various features (human and physical), as distinct from other places, and as undergoing change. In essence, place here tends to be singular in character – a result of the physical and human context of the place. Difference is emphasized over similarity, and places seen as changing and interdependent, where one's own response to place were generally not highlighted, although persuasive or discursive writing about place is mentioned. In contrast the newer 2008 (QCA 2007) programme of study (PoS) placed greater emphasis on key concepts and uniqueness of place, but also similarities, under the banner of 'cultural understanding' (Taylor, 2010). This PoS placed greater emphasis on everyday knowledges and geographical imaginations - diversity and cultural understanding are emphasized. Perception is also important with reference to distinctions between place and space. Place is linked with

perception and representation, whereas space with interaction, pattern and distribution. Important for this study, the PoS also gave advice to teachers for teaching about the local area and how to incorporate this into teaching as a framework around which to help children explore key themes and concepts in geography.

Contemporary literature is beginning to explore the applicability of space / place theory to school geography (Morgan & Lambert, 2003; Rawling, 2007). An example at primary level is the Geographical Association's Valuing Places Project, a synthesis of ideas from place thinking in academic geography and pedagogies of place-based education. Newer relational constructions of place and space in university geography are tentatively being applied to teaching in schools – notably notions of multiple identities of place and exploration of how place is represented and interconnected (see for example Bustin, 2011 and Picton, 2011).

How place is conceptualised in schools is embedded within the wider intellectual context and ideologies of education, and in particular geography education. Rawling (2000 p.212) distinguishes between a number of key ideologies in geography education summarised in Appendix 3. These include utilitarian, cultural restorationist, liberal, progressive educational, radical and vocational ideologies, all influencing how place and environment are understood in schools. Not only do these ideologies shift on a macroscale, but also the more microscale of schools, departments and individual educators, meaning there is a huge plurality in understandings of place and the environment in curricula. However, what these broad ideological shifts over time mean for place and the local environment in curriculum and learning, is a shift away from place as location, towards place as contested, relational, dynamic, social produced and rich in personal meaning.



Table 10 outlines the key units of study at NQIS that explore place and / or the local area based on a review of curricula across all year levels.

Year group	Theme	Content
5	Location	A unit loosely based on International Primary Curriculum topic 'Location'. Primarily involves the study of a tourist destination with a focus on both human and physical geography, and the impacts of tourism. Many students opt to research their home country.
6	Home country / host country	A research-based unit designed to compare home / host countries. Qatari students opt to research a destination they have visited. Involves a desert walk in the area outside the compound to explore the natural vegetation / landscape.
7	People on the Move	This integrated humanities unit has some focus on map skills (with links to explorers), and some teachers have tried to link in local geography, although this is not explicit in schemes of work.
Years 9+	International Award	As part of the International Award (similar to Duke of Edinburgh Award) students must undertake an expedition. For the bronze award this is conducted on the west coast of Qatar, but practice walks / camps are in the desert areas directly around the compound. Interestingly Silver and Gold award expeditions are conducted in Oman and Nepal respectively, as it was felt the natural environment and topography didn't offer enough scope and challenge for students.

*Table 10: Place in the curriculum at NQIS*

These units of study will have an impact on the way the children understand place as part of their formal learning. The themes 'Location', 'Home Country / Host Country' and International Award all have some element of fieldtrips or expeditions.

### 3.1.3 School embeddedness in places - international schools and their environments

As a study of children's experiences grounded in the context of an international school it is necessary to explore the relationships that exist between international schools and their local communities. However, as Hayden (2006) notes, concepts of 'local' in international schools are blurred by mobility and communications. In some contexts, what is perceived as local and local community may be, in geographical terms, distant and vice versa. However, in this study local is still interpreted in geographical senses, despite the crumpling of distance. Many international schools include ideas of local community engagement as part of the school mission. However, in the case of NQIS this is not the case.

In my own experiences teaching in international schools, and from Hayden's (2006) exploration of international schools and external influences, I have identified a

number of key ways in which international schools engage with their local environment and communities, although this is a neglected field of study. Since there is so much diversity in international schools themselves, there is a great deal of diversity in the ways such schools engage with place, some of which include:

- Service learning projects.
- Fieldwork / off-site visits e.g. 'Classrooms Without Walls' experiences.
- Host country student enrolment.
- Integration of host country curricula (could be compulsory) and language learning.
- Physical structure of buildings.
- Host country teacher engagement – either as employees or offering professional development for teachers in community.

Therefore, international schools do not exist in isolation, but are embedded, to various degrees, in communities of migrants and nationals, often identifying both with internationalism, as well as more locally-based identities. International schools play an extremely important role in expatriate communities in terms of community building, often putting a great deal of effort into positioning themselves as at the centre of the international community (Sander, 2016). There is, however, a tendency to understand international schools as in some way separate from the places, in the wider sense, in which they exist, rather than a part of it. This is linked to their inherent *difference* (in terms of student body, language, curriculum, internationalism instead of localism) when compared to 'local' schools. In many senses international schools are defined and marketed by this very difference to local schools. What is clear is that schools themselves tend to be highly spatialized and sealed-off or gated spaces, with the space of the school an under-researched field of study (Valentine 2003, p.42).

However, Mitchell (1989) and Allen (2000) do examine the space of international schools. They note how deconstructing and analysing the architectural design of international schools is a good starting point to begin to understand school attitudes to the wider community. Some adopt an open-plan design, often incorporating elements of local design features creating a glocal architectural feel – a hybridised mix of global and local influences. Others mimic design features from elsewhere – modelled, for example, on the designs of public schools in the UK asserting a sense of differentness from the host community (Allen, 2000). With reference to NQIS, the

architecture and design of the school is best viewed in terms of separation and boundedness, as a school located within the confines of a gated community. This boundedness – physical and social - means that meaningful host country and local area engagement outside NQC is extremely challenging. While unusual, this kind of setting is not unique. Many schools in Saudi Arabia are in similar compound-settings. Similarly, mining company sponsored schools in Indonesia are often found within gated complexes.

International schools are diverse entities, and their engagement with the local environment - socially and in terms of using the physical environment as a site of learning or exploration – varies greatly. Allen (2000 p 125) writes:

‘[international] schools have frequently been aware of the community around them, but their reactions to these communities have been (and continue to be) far from uniform. Some have developed barriers, whether structural or cultural, to preserve their airy academia or to retain their sense of privilege; a few have embraced the local community with open arms. Many, however, have taken a stance somewhere in the middle of these two approaches, being attentive to market forces from outside, but seeing education as a process distinct from the business of the community’.

Placing NQIS in such a continuum of local community engagement is complex, and it is necessary to separate ‘local community’ into a number of entities appropriate to the case – the community as within the GC (immediate environment of the school), the wider community of the small settlements of North Qatar (notably Al Khor and Al Dhakira) and then beyond to Doha, the Gulf and global links. As the only school within the GC engagement with the immediate community, i.e. within the walls, is arguably strong. The school is an extremely significant place in the community, and by far the largest geographical landmark. However, beyond allowing a small number of local Qatari students to attend as fee-paying students (gas company employees are allowed up to 4 children tuition free), connections with the wider community are extremely weak. As noted previously, a small number of curriculum connections are made to explore the local area.

Cambridge (1998) uses an organic analogy to understand the relationship international schools have with the wider community or environment. Presenting

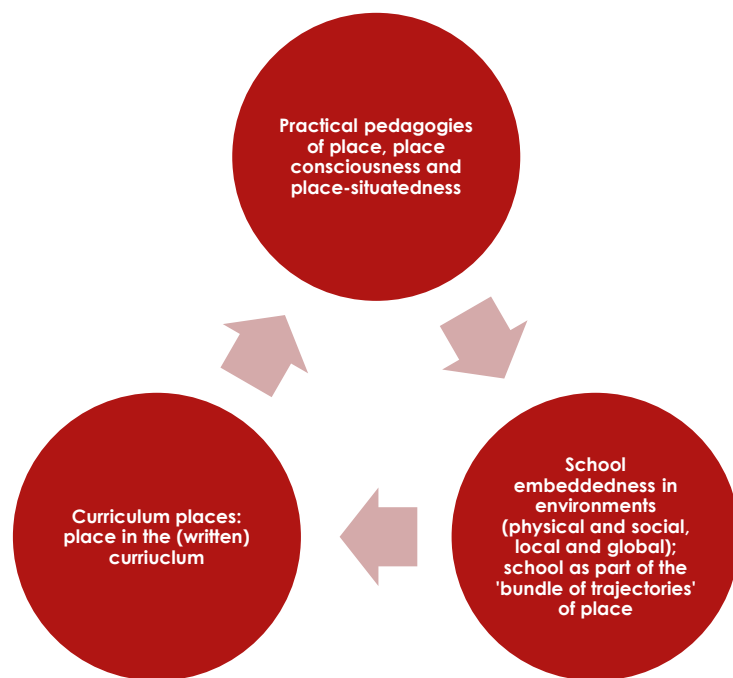
schools as 'open systems' they take in materials, process these and have outputs. Taking the analogy further, as organisms they have multiple ways of interacting with their environment. Barriers which exist between schools and the wider environment can be permeable allowing exchanges of ideas and cultures. With reference to the host environment of schools Cambridge writes

'International schools are organizations located within communities of stakeholders and others with diverse interests that may be in competition. The students and their parents, and the teaching staff, may come from a number of different countries and, depending on the school and its location, there may be either intimate or distant relations with the host country community ... The school will be profoundly influenced - either positively or negatively - by the host environment within which it operates' (p.201).

Using Cambridge's systems analogy, one important local 'input' is the Supreme Education Council in Qatar (for an exploration of education reform in Qatar see Brewer *et al*, 2007). During the time of research the council was undergoing a process which can broadly be seen as the symbolic 'Qatarisation' of education in the country. This involved a process of foreign teachers becoming locally certified and given temporary teaching licenses, as well as requirements for Arabic language and Islamic studies for all students, in local and international schools. Qatari history and social studies was beginning to become a curriculum requirement for all schools.

### **3.1.4 Summary**

It is clear that place-based education, place in the curriculum and school embeddedness in place are contested fields. From trying to bring place 'back into learning', to critiquing notions of the 'local' in PBE entirely, there is little agreement on the best way forward in terms of place-conscious pedagogies. However, what is clear is that place and 'the local' (in a geographical sense) are integral to international school functioning and philosophy. Place has been explored above from three key perspectives – the use and role of the local environment in the learning process, the role of place in the curriculum itself and finally how international schools interact and engage with their environment of situation. Arguably these three interactions are co-implicated in how schools are themselves 'place-situated', summarised in Figure 9 below emphasising how they impact *upon*, and are reflected *within*, each other.



*Figure 9: Place and the local environment in schools: three interacting elements*

Part two of chapter 4 shifts focus from the macroscale of curriculum and schools, onto the more microscale of children themselves, specifically how concepts like place attachment, place identity and concepts of ‘home’ relate to children, in particular TCKs attending international schools.

### **3.2 International school students and place**

Focusing on the international school context of the study, within international education research, those studies exploring experiences of international school education and TCKs tend to explore senses of belonging (for example Sears, 2011) identity and notions of ‘home’ (Cannings, 2004; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011) with minimal reference to the physicality of place and child-local environment interactions. According to Antonsich (2010), theoretical and empirical exploration of the relationship between place and self has not received enough attention. Humanistic theory, social constructivism and cultural materialism have directed interest towards socializing discourses where the individual has arguably been marginalised (Antonsich, 2010). While this is not a study of identity, belonging or place attachment *per se*, instead focusing on environmental experience, issues of identity, belonging and place attachment are certainly of significance in relation to place experience and

local environmental cognition, interaction and perception. Similarly, the home is an important site *within* the local environment, so needs consideration.

Some of the important terms used in this section are 'home', 'belonging' and 'identity'. Home is viewed in terms of the place a person primarily identifies as their place of belonging. This may or may not be their place of current residence, and a person may consider themselves as having multiple homes. Linked to this belonging is viewed as being in process (or flux), conceptualised as a 'sense of home' (Walsh, 2006). Identity, or more specifically place identity, is understood as ways in which place contributes to sense of self-identity.

### **3.2.1 Place attachment**

A key element of home, belonging and identity is place attachment. This concept is particularly important in this study because of the reference to place – in a physical and socio-cultural sense. While place attachment is not a focus of the research, place experience is foundational in the construction of place attachments. Different environments and place experiences will lead to different place attachments, as part of a child's personal negotiation of place. Place attachment refers to the idea that people develop special bonds with certain settings and places (Altman & Low, 1992). For Relph (1976), the notion of being 'inside' a place, or *insideness*, is the most important element of place attachment and the feeling of belonging. Tuan (1980) goes further to suggest *rootedness*, where one's personality merges with a place. While the physicality of places is important, the social relationships and cultural associations with place are central to the concept of place attachment – positive social experiences in a place can lead to strong attachments to physical locations associated with such experiences. Interest in place attachment has only emerged since the 1970s when researchers began to explore topics such as territoriality and environmental meaning (Altman & Low, 1992). With reference to territoriality Riley (1992) asked whether human need for territories can be paralleled with animals. The practical use of research in environmental psychology has been used in the design of appropriate spaces for different social groups such as the elderly and children.

Chawla (1992) writes specifically about childhood place attachments. 'Place attachments can be important because they contribute to the present quality of a child's life, or because they leave enduring effects after childhood is over' (p.730) ... if we borrow the criteria used to measure social attachments, we have the following

provisional definition: children are attached to a place when they show happiness at being in it and regret or distress at leaving it, and when they value it not only for the satisfaction of physical needs, but for its own intrinsic qualities' (p.64). However, no place is static - all places are constantly changing – physically, socio-culturally and demographically. This certainly has implications for children. For Chawla, attachment to place broadens and expands with age – initially being the area near to the caregiver, but expanding with age to include neighbourhoods extending in adolescence during search for self-identity to include stronger regional / national attachments. These ideas are summarised in Figure 10 from Chawla (1992 p.68).

Birth to 5 years	Middle Childhood (6-11 years)	Adolescence (12-17 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>Social affiliations:</b> Sense of oneness with the world which, if securely nurturing creates a sense of world's goodness.</li> <li>•<b>Self-identity:</b> beginning self-control and sense of self, leading to the appropriation and possession of things.</li> <li>•<b>Inward pulls:</b> limited physical territory in proximity to caretakers.</li> <li>•<b>Outward attractions:</b> given reliable care, freedom to turn attention to environmental exploration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>Social affiliations:</b> Cooperation with others in exploring, games and producing things, usually in same-sex groups.</li> <li>•<b>Self-identity:</b> largely determined by physical strength and dexterity, the ability to produce socially valued things, and behaviour to animals, things and people.</li> <li>•<b>Inward pulls:</b> habitual play range in the yards and streets near home. Appreciation of a room or space in one's own in the home.</li> <li>•<b>Outward attractions:</b> Creation of individual and group playhouses and forts. Expansive local exploration including active enjoyment of natural landscape features.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>Social affiliations:</b> formation of mixed-sex groups. Meeting places with friends in commercial and natural environments.</li> <li>•<b>Self-identity:</b> a search for self-identity characterised by emotional and physical uprootedness in the course of movement between childhood and adult roles and places.</li> <li>•<b>Inward pulls:</b> withdrawal into the privacy of one's home and room with reduced neighbourhood use. An appreciation of solitude, often in the natural environment. Attachment to childhood places in memory.</li> <li>•<b>Outward attractions:</b> Travel to distant jobs, recreation and commercial attractions. Allegiance to an idealised nature, regionalism or natinoalism.</li> </ul>

*Figure 10: Chawla's (1992) model of childhood place attachment*

The challenge for TCKs and globally mobile children is that many of these spheres of attachment are frequently disrupted and change, which is why attachments to multiple places and mobility may have implications for place experience, place attachment and place identity (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). Chawla concludes that the key functional elements of place for children are in providing 'security, social affiliation, and creative expression and exploration' (p.68).

### 3.2.2 Place identity

Closely linked to the concept of place attachment is place identity. Place identity can refer to the identity of a place – its uniqueness and features. However, in this context it is referring to the ways in which place contributes to sense of self-identity. The view that place contributes greatly to identity is one held by many psychologists (see Twigger & Uzzell, 1996; Breakwell, 1986). Proshansky (1978, p.147) defines place identity as 'those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment'. In later writings Proshansky *et al* (1983, p.59) state that place identity is 'a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives' – meaning that personal identity is in relation to physical objects. For Casakin and Bernado (2012, p.iii) place identity 'refers to the personal meanings, symbols, and significance that places have for their residents, visitors, and users. Thus, place identity constitutes a component of personal identity through which people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place'. Each individual has a huge number of spaces and places which are meaningful to them as part of their 'environmental past'. Identity may be drawn from a regional scale, for example identifying with Europe / being European. Equally national, regional and local attachments and identities may be strong. In the case of TCK's experiences of place, the role of the direct local environment in shaping identity is further complicated. Specifically, I would question the *extent* to which the local area in which TCK children live impacts their identity and belonging, this being dependent on location, housing type and location, school attended, personality, length of residence, parental attitudes to mention just a few important factors.

The challenges posed by processes of globalisation, migration and mobility are well documented both in terms of peoples' identities and the identity of places, threatened by homogenizing forces (Lewicka, 2010; Relph, 1976). Clearly place identity is therefore contested for many TCKs, for whom distant homes or places may form a more significant aspect of their identity. If, as Proshansky (1978) states, place identity is a key element of self-identity through defining oneself in terms of belonging to a specific place, place identity for TCKs is complex. However, for children in NQC who have been resident in the community for the majority of their lives, it is possible that their local area in part forms part of their identity.



In the context of TCKs, research suggests that other anchors such as family, family employees and sponsoring corporations (i.e. parent employers) are perhaps stronger than those connections with place (Sander, 2016). Notions of place identity can be critically viewed as somewhat romantic. For Massey (2010), places are articulations of 'natural' and social relations, relations that are not fully contained within the place itself. So, first, places are not closed or bounded – which, politically, lays the ground for critiques of exclusivity. Second, places are not 'given' – they are always in open-ended process. They are in that sense 'events'. Therefore, identity that is place-based, must change as places change (or indeed location changes in the case of migrants). Third, places and their identity will always be contested (we could almost talk about local-level struggles for hegemony). In this sense, any deriving of identity from place must be fluid, as places themselves are fluid (particularly in developing localities such as Qatar, where the majority of the population is resident temporarily in the country). Thus such identity can only be concluded to be somewhat fragile. Identity and belonging will now be explored.

### **3.2.3 Identity and belonging**

There are a growing number of researchers examining the lives and experiences of TCKs, many focusing on identity and belonging, particularly since the Useem's (1976) publication of the same name. Other terms used to describe TCKs include McCaig's (1992) 'global nomad' or expatriate children. TCK is the preferred term used in this study. Hayden (2006) identifies four key complexities for TCKs:

- 1) Distance from passport country
- 2) Lack of clarity about national identity
- 3) Blurred concepts of home
- 4) Challenges living in a place where the language might be different to their home language.

The latter two certainly have potential implications for children's place experience in their location of residence insofar as perception of 'home' (in the socio-emotional sense) as a different and possibly distant locality could reduce affordances with place, and linguistic and cultural gaps could reduce confidence in exploring the local environment. Considering identity from a social constructivist perspective, Sears (2011) in her study of identity, belonging and conceptualizations of home, found that in her sample of 76 international school children the following themes emerged:

- Assumptions of being globally mobile as the norm.
- Existence of multiple identities – identity as not fixed, but in flux.
- Sense of ‘coming from’ multiple places, but with some fixed notions of the significance of passport countries for many.
- ‘Home’ as a shifting concept for geographically mobile children.
- Life as a story – narrative of experiences.

Although this is not a study of belonging or identity per se, these are still significant concepts in any study involving TCKs, as an appreciation of how children experience place must acknowledge the role of identity and belonging in impacting experiences of place. The degree to which a child considers a place to be ‘home’, as a place of belonging, will impact how they experience, interact and bond with that place. If a place is not considered ‘home’ – if there is a sense of detachment from the place and that ‘home’ is elsewhere – interaction and use of that space will be affected. It could be argued that lack of attachment or bonding to a place could result in feelings of animosity to the area (and its inhabitants) and therefore result in negative actions towards that place (Kellet, 2005). Kellet (2005) asserts that when placelessness, or rootlessness, prevails, people are less invested in protecting the cultural and physical environment of a place.

Research examining sense of belonging with reference to TCKs includes those who see relocation as having a negative impact such as Wertsch (1991), who claims that the continual moving of military children led to little sense of belonging or home with negative consequences later in life. However, Pollock & Van Reken (1999) suggest otherwise, saying that globally mobile children can successfully make adjustments to new places, and even socially benefit from the experience of being geographically mobile. Fail (1995) used a Likert scale to assess participants belonging to country, community, place and relationships. Her findings suggest that belonging to relationships was considerably stronger than belonging to place or location. This is strong evidence that it is the social structure of a place that is of significance for TCKs rather than the physicality of place. This goes against many ideas about the relationships between people, place, nature and emotional well-being which emphasise rootedness (Weil in Kellet, 2005).

Despite Weil's emphasis on the importance of rootedness and place, he does write of multiple roots, suggesting that mobility and rootedness are not necessarily in opposition. Orr (1992, p.130) writes that 'knowledge of a place- where you are and where you come from – is intertwined with the knowledge of who you are. Landscape in other words, shapes mindscape'. Indeed, this association between rootedness, belonging and connection between place is strong in humanistic literature. However, while most writers agree that attachment to place and a sense of belonging is a prerequisite for balance and adjustment, this does not preclude temporary attachments that globally mobile people may have with place(s).

For Pearce (2002, p 150) identity 'is seen as the perception that subjects have of their own properties, applying to themselves the value system that they have constructed by interactions within their social group'. The central elements of identity are 'self' and 'alterity' (Pearce, 1998 p.54), but for globally mobile children these two notions may be complex. It is suggested that attachments to parents for globally mobile children is strong, but to other people might be more ephemeral (Pearce 2002) because of the transient nature of some relationships established. The implication again highlighted here is that it is likely that attachments to people, rather than places (in a physical sense) is more significant for mobile children, as also explored with reference to belonging. Potentially this could affect environmental cognition and place experience, with globally mobile children possibly more likely to have been exposed to a wider *variety* of environments (in a physical and socio-cultural sense), but for less *time* than less mobile children. This could mean a wider variety of environments known, but in less detail, with implications requiring further research.

### **3.2.4 Concepts of home in a transnational context**

Homes are a significant aspect and site of place experience, understood both in the sense of home as belonging – 'a space of imagined belonging' (Walsh 2006, p.125) - and home as place of abode. Any concept of 'local environment' or 'local place' is relational to an understanding of home, in so far as local implies the area immediately in the vicinity of one's place of residence. However, for transnational and globally mobile populations, concepts of home are blurred, contested and complex, as Hayden (2006) and Sears (2011) have identified. According to De Pres (1991) home is an extremely important concept in psycho-analytical theory and in many senses represents self.

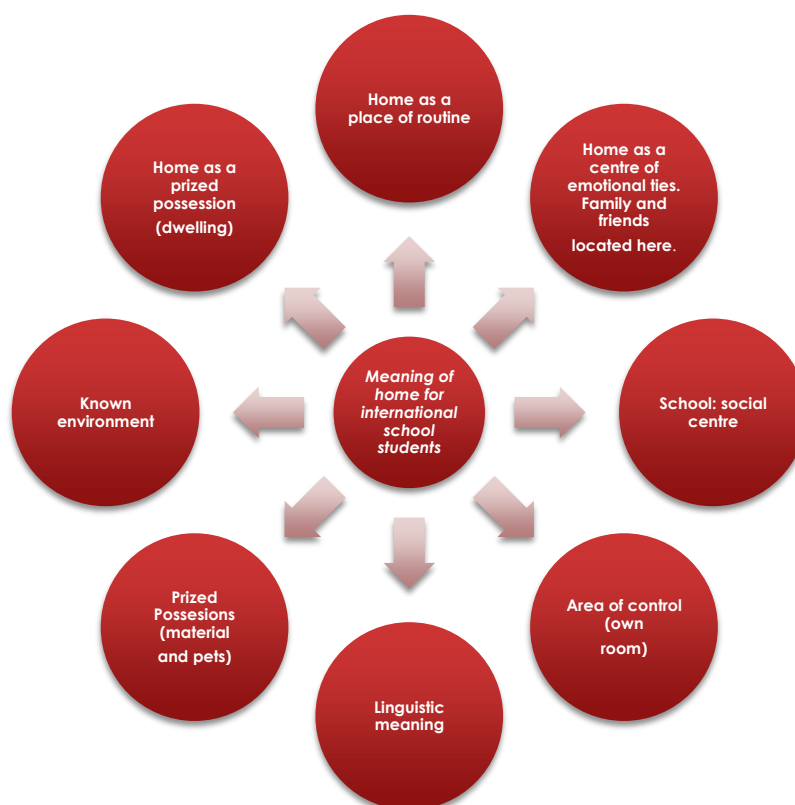
However, Jenks (1996) and Pain (1994) clearly articulate that homes cannot be uncritically examined as special or good places for children. While for many they are important havens from school and public space, they are also sites for physical, mental and sexual abuse for some children and therefore places of fear and repulsion (Pain, 1994). Similarly, freedom of movement and expression within homes is not universal – certain areas may be out-of-bounds or even completely inaccessible. In a similarly critical vein, Anderson (2007) proposes a radical pedagogy of 'homeplace', where home is understood as exclusionary and founded on interiority. However, I would argue that it is this very interiority that makes home a space of safety and comfort for many. From a socio-cultural perspective the role of children in homes varies between families, cultures and socio-economic circumstances. This section will examine concepts of home, primarily from an international education perspective, including research undertaken with international school students.

For most students at NQIS, home is considered to be both the local area but also a location in their passport / parents' country(ies), something reflected in data discussed in Chapter 9. Where a child considers 'home' to be is likely to be significant in helping to understand their construction of place, as if 'home', in the sense of emotional attachment and belonging, is considered to be a location away from the local area of residence, this will affect their relationship with the place, perhaps weakening it. Indeed, local environmental experience is centred around the home in a physical sense, as dwelling. Dwelling here is used to denote the physical structure of homes, not in the sense understood by Ingold (2000) who challenges the existence of 'an imagined separation between the human perceiver and the world, such that the perceiver has to reconstruct the world, in consciousness, prior to any meaningful engagement with it' (2000, p.191). Ingold's 'dwelling perspective' views environmental experience as a process where the binary between the perceived and world are intertwined rather than separated, and continually emergent.

As noted, definitions of 'local place' or 'local environment' are relational, centred around place of dwelling. As a result, exploring what is meant by home in a transnational context is important, as it is part of a crude binary between dwelling as private space and local area as public space. However, concepts of home go beyond home as dwelling / structure, and can be conceptualized on a larger scale. For international school students it is perfectly possible to have multiple and contested

constructions of 'home', in terms of both scale and location. Sander (2014 p.5), in her study of TCK experiences in Shanghai, found that 'while expatriate youths associate houses and bedrooms with notions of home, they relate the gated estates to boredom and borders. They voice a strong desire to transgress the borders of expat family housing estates and seek out places and activities outside the gates'. Similar findings emerge in this study.

Cannings' (2004) study of international school students' concepts of home undertaken at a school in Switzerland highlighted some of the key challenges TCKs face in defining what and where home is. Cannings built on a variety of notions of home, from a linguistic, architectural and psychological perspective. As he notes, home is used to define both real and imagined places, and is not spatially limited – it can refer to a very specific place (a structure, a house), or somewhere much more substantial. Key for Cannings is that movement defines home, insofar as it is the foci of movement – be it on a daily basis or less frequent. His model outlining the meaning of home is adapted and summarized in Figure 11.



*Figure 11: Meanings of home for international school students (Cannings, 2005 p.130).*

Of significance for this research was the finding that the known environment was key in meanings of home. This suggests that the local environment and immediate area of residence for international school children is significant in defining home and belonging. Importantly, Cannings (2005) found that length of residence was key in determining the extent to which international school students identified their current place of residence at home. Many of the students had multiple concepts of home – both as current location and another location (for example birth place, or another location in their country of nationality) but in all cases home is a location of strong emotional ties, similar to other research findings (Westman, 1995; Altman & Low, 1992; Chawla, 1992; Douglas, 1976). Here, affective bonds with a place, a defined and bounded place, were strong as a result of attachments to family, place and community built up over time. Bonds with the physical environment are significant, as it is through interaction with this that memories are built. For long-term residents of NQC this is important, where home equates with security and the ability to exercise control over space. However, Cannings found that more mobile students tended to identify home with significant people, rather than significant places. This supports a more ‘global sense of home’. The significance of dwelling as home was highlighted in the data, where home is equated with a physical place of residence.

For Chawla (1992), a key aspect of home is the ability to control space – and for adolescents to have a private place to retreat to, something reflected in Cannings (2005) and Hackett *et al*'s (2015) findings. Physical objects were also significant in defining home, as well as pets. Davis (2001) found similar findings, linking the importance of material goods and possessions in defining home. For Sack (1997), home is a special place and one that is integrated including elements of the physical and cultural environment. Another important factor is that of mobility, and how home is juxtaposed against this movement. Dovey (1985) suggests that home is an ordering principle between opposing ideas of home vs. journey. It is a spatial concept and has no meaning if there is no journey / mobility. Thus it could be argued that for children with increased mobility, i.e. expatriate children, the meaning of home becomes stronger because of increased mobility.

Franke (2008) explores concepts of home for TCKs, from a humanistic perspective influenced by Tuan, understanding home as the interplay of connections to place, social connections and material connections. For TCKs, however, other factors are also important according to Franke, notably ‘emotive imaginations and time’ (feelings

of security in certain places, for example) and family connections to passport countries, language and culture. Franke writes (p.143):

‘This melting-pot of cultures results in a confusion over feelings of home.. Many TCKs have reported in the interviews that they find it hard to tell where home is.. Hence, it can be assumed that TCKs’ notions of home are spatially distributed over different countries. They feel belonging to their parental country and, at the same time, feel at home in their current host country and identify with former host countries. Thus, TCKs have “multiple homes”’.

This concept of multiple homes is supported by other research, for example Hayden (2006) and Cannings (2005). For Franke (ibid. p.148) this means:

‘TCKs live in a permanent confusion about where they belong and where they should locate their home. One could say, they live in a compromise: They cannot adapt to every aspect of a certain place they momentarily live in, because they have experienced it differently somewhere else and thus have a greater ability to compare and weigh up [sic] the different aspects of home. The more mobile TCKs are, the more abstract their idea of home becomes... Thus, a TCK’s home is rather an imaginative idea than an actual location’

Concepts of home are explored in Chapter 9, focusing on the materiality of homes as dwelling, more than senses of belonging as explored above, primarily due to the nature of this study exploring locally-grounded, environmental place experience. It is however useful to understand some of the complexities TCKs face in defining and constructing ‘home’ and places of belonging.

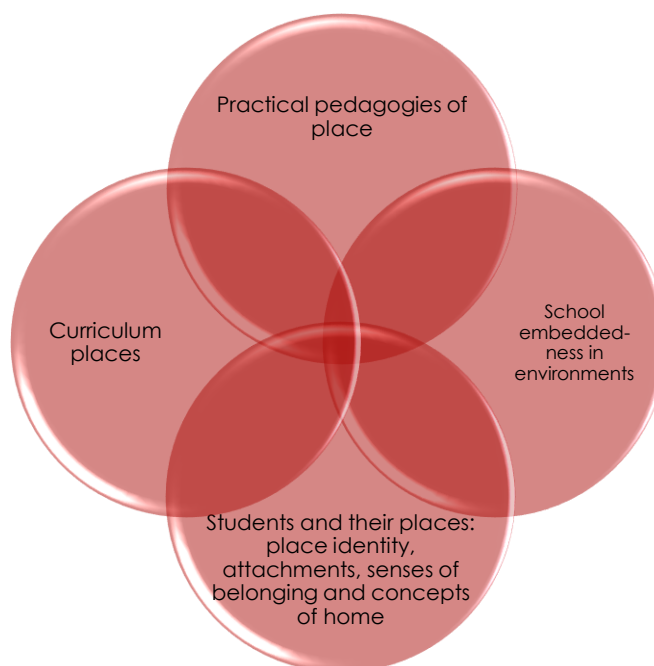
### **3.2.5 Summary**

The second part of Chapter 4 has focused on the ‘international education’ focus of this study, in particular the relevance of place attachment, place identity, belonging and concepts of home. Perhaps most significant for this study, as a study of local environment experience, is concepts of home. As Chapter 9 will reveal, homes – in a physical and emotional sense – form a major category in understanding children’s place experience. However, this chapter has highlighted that relationships with place,

and home in particular, are complex and contested, in positive and negative ways. The relationship between place and identity is also important to keep in mind. The important relationship between place and identity – with place as ‘physical-world socialization’ for children (Proshansky and Fabian 1987, p.22) – the importance of understanding experiences of place by adolescents is highlighted. With a globally mobile community, the term place *identities* becomes more appropriate than the singular, with various places and homes impacting sense of self.

### 3.3 Connecting the themes in Chapter 4

It is also important to connect key ideas from 4.1 and 4.2, since how international schools integrate place and place-based practices will impact their students’ place attachments, place identity and grounded senses of belonging. Figure 9 in 4.1.4 summarised the links between pedagogies of place, curriculum places and school embeddedness in place(s). This can now be expanded, in a school context, to include children themselves, best conceptualised in a Venn diagram (Figure 12) to emphasise interaction between all the different spheres:



*Figure 12: International schools, their students and place – synthesising the themes of Chapter 4*

Figure 12 emphasises how the three sphere of ‘schools and place’ interact with student place identities, place attachments and senses of belonging. Clearly other factors are significant, for example family attitudes to host culture and environment,



but international schools and their curricula are extremely significant for their students, and play a major social role in their communities (Sanders, 2016).

Chapter 5 follows developing a specific dimension of the local environment in this study – the geographical context and significance of being within a GC. It exposes the significance of concepts of gated minds, lives and communities, distinguishing between different types of gated communities.

## Chapter 5: Contextualising gated communities, homes and belonging:

The context of this research in an international school enclosed within a gated expatriate community is of significance, insofar as one of the broad aims of this research is to better understand children's experiences of such socio-spatial contexts (*RQ1 How do children living within a gated expatriate community in Qatar and attending a British international school experience their local environment*). There is very limited research directly exploring children's experiences of either expatriate enclaves, or gated communities. The study closest to this one in scope and focus is Sander's (2014, 2016) ethnographic exploration of children's experiences of gated communities in Shanghai. Sander found that experiences of gated communities were heterogeneous, and age dependent, with teenagers like those in this study most critical of 'gatedness'.

The significance of gated communities for children primarily lies in their boundedness. While boundaries exist in non-gated contexts – where boundaries can be physical (rivers, forests), imagined (known and unknown places) and social (demarcated by social class, ethnicity) – the boundaries in gated communities are starkly physical, visceral, visual and concrete. While for myself, as an adult resident in the compound, this gatedness was significant in my experiences and constructions of place, I wanted to see whether it impacted children as well.

### **4.1 Gated communities, expatriate enclaves and gated expatriate enclaves: research in similar geographical contexts**

A growing volume of research from a variety of disciplines, notably urban planning studies, cultural geography and anthropology have started to explore gated communities as a feature of living spaces across the world – often for wealthy nationals and expatriates in countries with more extreme inequalities in wealth distribution (see Low, 2003; Brunn, 2006; Glasze, 2006; Borsdorf & Hidalgo 2008; Grant & Rosen, 2009; Ordowaz-Coates 2015). There is now also some interest in how these residential forms are impacting children's sense of place and place experience (for example Sander, 2016). With the rise in the number of gated

communities and the growth of expatriate enclaves globally, this is a significant area of research with potential implications for educators and communities outside the case study area. Indeed, 'gated living', whether in compounds, gated housing complexes or security controlled condominiums, is increasingly the norm for TCKs attending international schools (Sander, 2016). The significance of this lies in the understanding that physical space, in this case gated, produces the preconditions of social space. As Landman (2010 p.58) notes, gatedness

'translates into questions such as: what can 'we' or 'they' do 'here/there'? It becomes a question of 'ours' and 'theirs'. Or an issue of 'inside' and 'outside'. A sense of place, community and belonging relates directly to these issues and, more specifically, to the question of 'whose place'. It is also more associated with the behaviour of people inside the gated communities and use of space. This creates preconditions for a sense of identity, 'our people, group, and neighbourhood' or simply 'our place'.

Gatedness is first explored in more general terms and beyond physical gatedness, with reference to gated minds and gated lives as well as gated communities themselves.

#### **4.1.1 Gatedness: Gated minds, gated lives, gated communities**

Brunn (2006) distinguishes between three interconnected themes relevant to this study: gated communities, gated lives and gated minds. His ideas are illustrated in Figure 13 to highlight interconnections. Together these three components make up a broad understanding of gatedness. Dupuis & Thorns (2008 p.145) state in their analysis of gated communities that

'the emphasis shifts from gated communities as physical and spatial objects to the idea of 'gatedness', a mental construct that characterizes the nature of existence in a risk society. It is argued that the proliferation of gated communities is one example of individualized 'forting up' practices that have become increasingly common as the trust in public institutions to manage the perceived increase in risk has declined'.

This is a shift away from viewing such environments as a response to lifestyle, elitism, fear of crime and protection of property values.

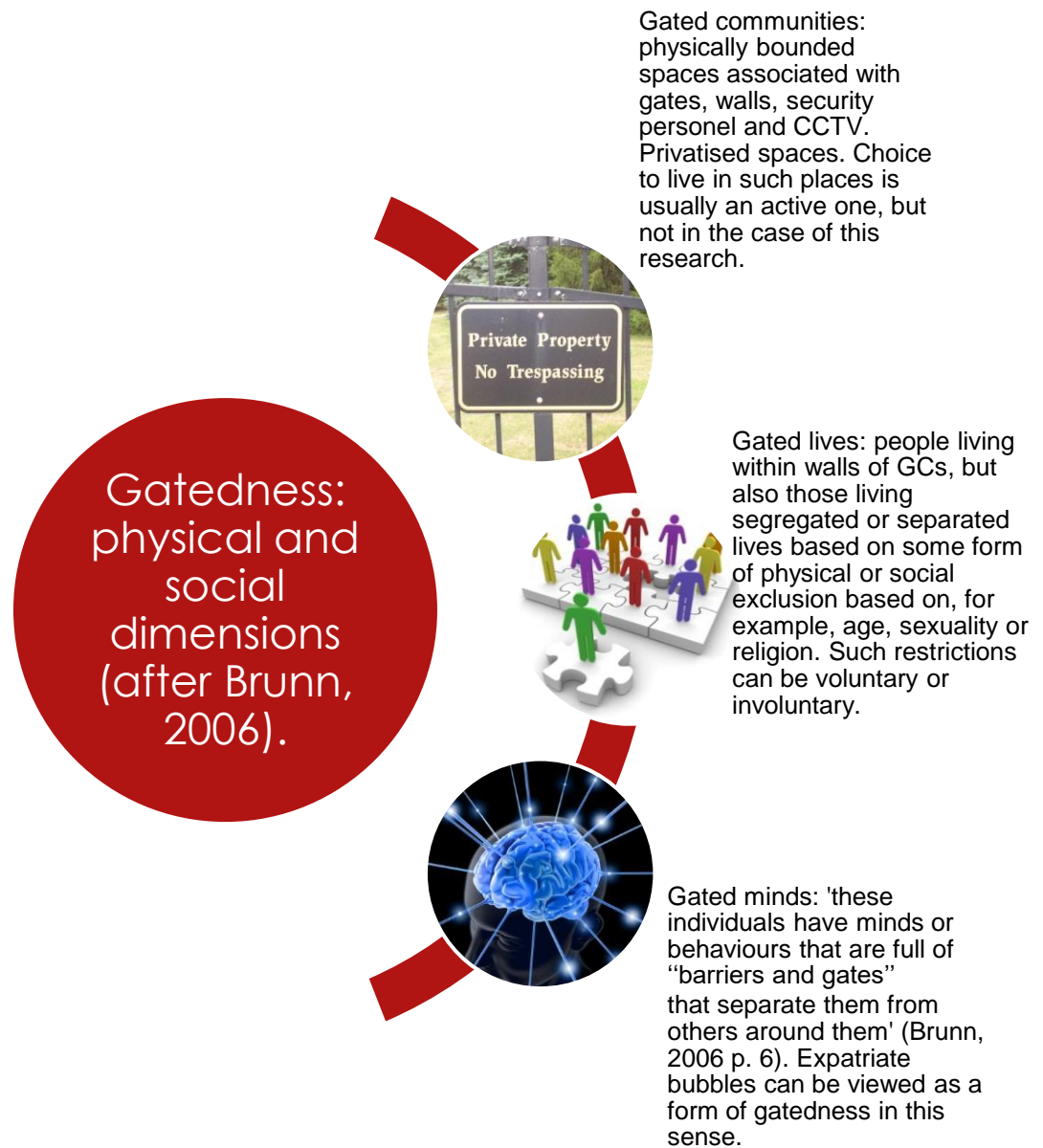


Figure 13: Gatedness: physical and social dimensions (after Brunn, 2006).

All these forms of gatedness are experienced by children, to varying degrees. In the context of this study, it is a particularly important concept, with some children arguably experiencing all three forms of gatedness in Figure 13 in their lives. However, with reference to gated communities themselves, these are not homogenous entities, something which will now be explored.

#### 4.1.2 Distinguishing between expatriate enclaves, gated communities and gated expatriate enclaves

There are three interconnected and relevant terms which are used in this study – expatriate enclaves, gated communities and gated expatriate communities. These terms are defined in Figure 14 below:

##### Expatriate or migrant enclaves

- these are areas, usually urban, which are dominated by migrants. There are often different enclaves for different ethnic and social groups, generally dependent on wealth and cultural background (Pow, 2010). Boundaries in such enclaves are social rather than physical but boundaries may be visible in the landscape.

##### Gated communities

- Gated communities, common in Qatar and the Gulf more widely, are walled residential neighbourhoods with a range of security systems, gates and security staff. Such residential complexes make what once would have been considered public space (or at least quasi-public), private. These GCs often have shared facilities like gyms, pools and restaurants. They tend to cater for more affluent residents.

##### Gated expatriate communities

- NQC is an excellent example of a gated expatriate community. Similar compounds are found in the Middle East, China and SE Asia, and they merge both expatriate enclaves and gated communities to form a socially and physically bounded environment in which migrants reside. They can be for high- or low-income migrants. Such places are marked by difference and have physical and social boundaries.

*Figure 14: Types of gated communities and enclaves*

### 4.1.3 Expatriate gated communities

Although there is a growing volume of literature and research examining gated communities, particularly in the USA, none of these papers focus on expatriate gated communities as sub-type of GC. However, Cohen (1977) in *Expatriate Communities* was one of the first writers to examine, from a sociological perspective, expatriate communities, with some reference to gated communities. Cohen's research, despite being 40 years old, provides a useful conceptual framework in which expatriate gated communities can be examined. He distinguishes expatriate communities, which are defined by their transience and privileged status, by:

- Size of the community.
- Homo-heterogeneity of the community.
- Socio-cultural distance from the host culture. The greater the distance (real or perceived), the more likely segregation will occur.
- Natural vs. planted expatriate communities. Natural expatriate communities are more likely be diverse and integrated into host society. Planted communities, typified by company townships and military zones, tend to be geographically and socially segregated from host society.

Under these categories NQC is a large expatriate community (c. 10,000 residents) with a degree of heterogeneity with over 40 nationalities represented. Socio-cultural distance with the host community is, for most, significant. NQC, as a company township / compound, is a good example of a 'planted' expatriate community. Cohen does not however explore in depth the experiences of expatriates, instead providing an overview of the diversity of expatriate communities in the 1970s. Some key empirical studies informing this one are summarised in Table 11.

Study	Summary and key findings	Relevance to this study
<b>Glasze (2002; 2006)</b>	Explores historical development of gated communities in KSA. Findings based on interviews and participant observation. Describes strong communities in compounds based on ethnic networks – a social environment with a great deal of connections. Describes the contradictory notion of freedom and openness within the walls and gates of fortified compounds. This is largely because of the cultural differences between host and migrants, in particular non-Muslim expatriates. No reference to children's experience in GCs	Both key findings relevant to study, in particular the importance of cultural / ethnic social networks, which emerges in this study.
<b>Wu &amp; Webber (2004); Wu (2005)</b>	Explores 'foreign gated communities' in Beijing, focusing on their political and economic contexts and origin of the demand. Describes these compounds as 'commodity housing'. Attributes their gatedness more to status differentiation than security concerns.	Provides some useful context, and how processes of transnationalism and globalisation are leading to growth of GCs globally. No reference to experiences of people living in GCs.
<b>Domenico &amp; Domenico (2006)</b>	Discuss urban enclaves in Ibadan, Nigeria, during the 1960s. Expatriate enclaves (as opposed to gated communities) are described here as symbolic islands, rather than physical islands.	Some features of life for expatriates in Ibadan at this time resonate with experiences in NQC, notably the importance of social clubs.
<b>Lauring and Selmer (2009)</b>	Ethnographic study of Danish expatriates living on a KSA compound. The context of the research was human resource management, and the study concludes that the strong Danish national group established and maintained in the compound, and associated in-group dominated life at work and outside work, contributed to perceptual bias and discriminatory behaviour against non-Danish employees in the workplace.	It is possible that such a finding could be applied in adapted form to children and their relationships within a school context, where the divisions (based on age, religion or ethnicity) within the compound community may be carried over into school life. Attending a school within a GC could act to blur boundaries between school - public space - home.
<b>Tezel (2011)</b>	Qualitative study based on interviews with parents of young children. Study does focus on children, but on parental concerns about children's interaction in GCs using case study in Istanbul rather than children's experiences. Found parents concerned about use of outdoor space in a physically separate and secured compound. Describes how children's mobility directly depended on parental concerns about the conditions in the GC in relation to safety and environmental factors, security factors, quality of play facilities and social aspects. Concludes that further research is needed to examine children's experiences of living in gated communities, in particular impacts on outdoor experiences.	Useful but does not directly engage with children and their experiences, instead focusing on interviews with parents. The transnational / expatriate context of this research is also different to Tezel's which focused on Turks living in Turkey. Identifies gap in research exploring children's experiences of GCs.
<b>Ordowaz-Coates (2015)</b>	2 year ethnographic study of life in a 'Western, gated, militarized and isolated compound' in KSA (p.233). Focuses on gender roles within / outside GC. Applies Goffman's 'total institution' and Geltner's (2008, 2011) 'semi-including institutions' theorising to study. Conceptualises GC as a 'soft' and 'gendered' total institution. Similar context to NQC since GC is more cross-sectional and diverse in terms of residents.	Provides insights into application of sociological theory to GCs. Useful insights into the permeability of compounds: 'Compound living is different; it acts as a semi-permeable membrane of exchange. There is a notion of the self-limitation of inhabitants and the 'gate' becomes perceptible beyond its physical manifestation.' (Ordowaz-Coates p 234).
<b>Karthirevlu (2016)</b>	Examines the 'spatial logic' of gated communities in Dubai, distinguishing between the cramped gated camps of low-income migrants, and the luxurious gated communities of highly-paid migrants. For Kathirevlu, both are the product of state-led neo-liberal discourses, and divisive in their contributions to urban space. This is a form of 'spatial governmentality' which allows Dubai to exclude the low-wage population of migrants out of sight, and provide more wealthy residents with a sense of exclusivity and symbols of prestige and wealth.	Context similar to NQC. NQC is in a similar geographical and socio-political context to Dubai, the compound itself sits somewhere between the two polarising types of Middle Eastern gated communities Kathirevlu describes.
<b>Sander (2016)</b>	Ethnographic study of TCK experiences of home, mobility and belonging in Shanghai. While not focused on gated communities per se, does highlight these as a significant feature of life for many expatriates in Shanghai, and does explore how different people experience these spaces depending on age, gender, cultural background. Finds teenagers can struggle with gatedness of compounds, in response retreating to homes / bedrooms or transgressing boundaries. Finds gated communities afford young children with a great deal of independent mobility <i>within</i> compounds. Examines how gated communities limit expatriate – local exchanges.	Extremely useful study with its reference to both gated communities and TCK experiences of these. Explores both younger children and adolescents. Methods used similar to this research (mind mapping, mental maps), but with greater emphasis on interviews. The key difference between the children in Sander's study and this one being that the school in Sander's research was not located on the gated communities she describes, and the urban context of Shanghai provided more opportunities for adolescents to explore their local area.

*Table 11: Gated community research*

#### **4.1.4 International schools inside gated communities**

Based on a review of international schools globally, primarily using databases available online, I have identified sixteen international schools that are in comparable contexts to NQC, that is located within a gated residential compound. Many gated communities have their own kindergartens, and non-international schools are also frequently found. With reference to international schools located within gated communities many are located in the Middle East, Indonesia and increasingly Central Asian countries, and most are owned by or affiliated with the oil, gas and mining industries, often in somewhat remote rural or exurban locations like NQC. In Pakistan, India and Mexico it is very common for gated communities to contain schools (not international schools). Similarly, there are 'company township' schools in many remote regions (for example Indonesia, Western China, Libya) through these tend not to be international schools, instead providing a local curriculum for children of employees. Foreign teachers may work in these locations, usually teaching ESOL. Some international schools, especially in China, have on-site housing, similar to gated communities, for staff and/or boarding students.

### **4.2 *Summary and conclusions***

The geographical context of a gated expatriate community is important, both in understanding the context of the study, but also in terms of examining the potential significance of findings in similar contexts, some of which are listed above. In many senses it is the gatedness of the local environment that makes this study unique, and its contribution unique. This chapter has highlighted the importance of viewing gated communities as a diverse group of spaces and institutions, ranging in permeability and purposes. Importantly, the lack of research exploring children's experiences of these spaces has been illustrated, with only Sander (2014; 2016) making direct reference to TCK experiences of gated communities in China. For many expatriates and TCKs, gated communities are the norm, so while NQC is unique, it is not atypical of the experiences of many TCK children.

Chapter 6 follows, explaining research design and ethics in this study, beginning with the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

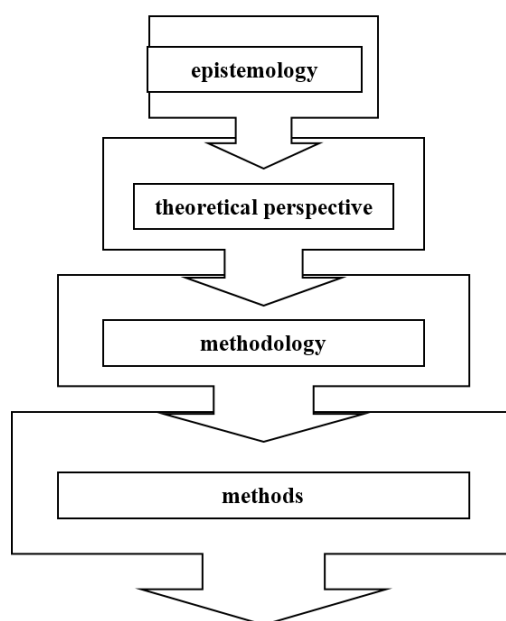


## Chapter 6: Research design and ethics

This chapter will explore the theoretical foundations of this research and methods employed. Grounded in a 'naturalistic framework' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2008) of exploring everyday environmental experience, this study will be explained as an interpretivist case study. While other approaches, notably ethnography, were considered as approaches, case study is felt to best fit the research context and aims. Firstly, the theoretical underpinnings of my research are outlined followed by an exploration of the methodological framework. My case study approach is explored with reference to Taylor's (2009b; 2013) conceptualisation of the 'case as space' after Massey's (2005) theorization of space and place. Ethical considerations are explored followed by an analysis of my chosen methods for data collection.

### 5.1 *Theoretical underpinnings*

Crotty's (1998) four research design elements (Figure 15) are used to explain the theoretical background to this research. These are epistemology – theoretical perspective – methodology – and methods.



*Figure 15: Four research design elements (from Crotty, 1998 p.4).*

In literature these terms are often used interchangeably causing confusion. With reference to the theoretical underpinnings in terms of epistemology and methodology this research is best framed as an interpretivist case study drawing inspiration from constructionism. My own epistemological framework is constructionism, which aligns itself to my theoretical perspective of interpretivism, outlined in 6.1.3. Crotty (1998, p.42) succinctly summarises constructionism as

‘the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context’.

Meaning is therefore neither objective nor subjective. Meaning is not created, but constructed through the world and objects. The purpose of this research is to explore students’ experiences place – specifically their local environment. I am not looking to elicit *one* truth from the children about their environment, nor am I just examining the individual meanings, experiences or understandings they have of their environment. Instead, I am interested in the ways in which the children interact and experience their environment creating understandings and constructions of it. As Raittila (2012 p.273) writes:

‘The experience of the place cannot be separated from the person who lives in it. The place affects the way in which the experienter perceives the world. The perceived environment determines our interpretation of life and our opportunities to act. People produce their environment, as do the children in the .. environment. The perception of the material environment (the Firstspace), action in and interpretation of the environment (the Secondspace) are inevitably intertwined (Soja 1996, 79). Thus, children generate their own urban environment through their personal interpretations. However, the interpretations of space are not independent from the existing environment.’

Other approaches than interpretivism were considered, notably action research and ethnography, but it was felt that case study best encompassed the wider purpose of the study, which is to conceptualize how a group of children, living and studying in a specific international context, experience their local environment. My methods of

investigation deviate quite significantly from the participant observation-based approaches of ethnography, in the sense that they are not entirely naturalistic. Similarly, while it is intended that the findings of this research provide insights to develop structures and curricula in the school under study, and in similar contexts, I have not identified a 'problem' to be addressed pulling the research away from action research.

### 5.1.1 Ontology

Critical realism, which I align myself with, exemplified by Sayer (1992) develops a view of knowledge, while objectively knowable, is intersubjectively mediated and dependent upon social practices defined by specific contexts, and therefore specific places. Hammersley (1992) and Silverman (2000) reject the implicit divide between objectivist and subjectivist approaches. Instead, they argue that objectivity, in the sense of 'the epistemological view that things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experiences' (Crotty, 2003 p.5), should be the aim of all social science. Hammersley (1992, p.62) notes that 'truth' has become somewhat of a taboo word in social science. The notion of 'subtle realism' rejects 'ultimate values' and the possibility of knowing anything with certainty or that there exists any foundation for certain knowledge, does also invoke plausibility, credibility and relevance as criteria by which we can 'judge' qualitative research. However, the 'truths' by which we read research are arguably culturally specific, and thus he suggests that there is no really adequate framework for judging ethnography. This is certainly relevant to this research, which like ethnography, is concerned with lived experience, children's subjectivities and everyday life.

From a critical realist perspective, the environment and place is an external physical reality, existing independently from people's minds – an ontology of place through production of meaning. It is not an underlying belief within this research that meaning exists apart from the operation of any consciousness. Crucially, when a child experiences the environment they are not discovering a meaning which *pre-exists* their encounter with it. In this sense I am not seeking one objective truth of place experience. Rather 'truth' and meaning come into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities (in particular in this case the physicality of the world and the complexities of social life) in our world, and is thus in flux and unstable. Equally I am not advocating a subjectivist approach which would claim that each individual child has a uniquely different construction of their local environment,

applying different meanings to it – this neglects the joint creation of knowledge and understanding, although constructions will reflect individual experiences and agencies. This supports theoretical perspectives in education of the social brain and co-constructivism. Similarly, such a subjectivist approach would propose that the environment itself makes no contribution to the meaning children ascribe to it. Rather, environments become meaningful as a result of interplay between the environment / place (object) and children (subject) – meaning is not created out of nothing or ‘discovered’ – it is (socially) created out of something.

All those in the research, including myself as teacher-researcher (something explored further in 6.6), are seen as situated within relational webs (family, friends, professional contacts, media contacts). Each of these generates social representations (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990) about the world, local environment and other places. In Massey’s (2005) terminology, each has his / her own trajectory, coming together to be a part of place, as part of the ‘bundle of trajectories’ that makes place. The socially situated individual accepts, engages with or rejects social representations about the world, and modifies or reinforces them through representing their own understanding to others. This has methodological and ethical implications, as the process of participation is likely to result in changing understandings of place. The philosophical stance underlying my methodology should enable exploration of this meaning construction within the complexity of a naturalistic setting. Interpretivism ‘looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world’ (Crotty, 2003 p.67). Alternatives would be positivist – accuracy of constructions of local environment (e.g. accuracy of mapping ability) – but my focus is on multiple representations and negotiations of place / local environment. There is some alliance to critical inquiry perspective, and I hope that findings help to critically inform future teaching and curriculum within my own practice, teaching at the school under study (now my former place of employment), and tentatively further afield.

### **5.1.2 Epistemology**

This research deploys a constructionist epistemology – as such it is located between objectivist and subjectivist where in objectivist studies meaning resides in the object, conversely in subjectivist research where meaning imposed by subject. Until the 1970s, studies in geography education were broadly objectivist, but with subsequent shifts towards more constructionist or subjectivist research. It is within this shift that

my research is situated. As a study of children's place experience, this focus on place necessitates considering knowledge generation about the physical, objective, tangible world (of roads, parks, cities, trees) and the world of social meaning (perceptions, experiences, relationships). These cannot be separated (Crotty, 2003 p.55-56):

‘whether we would describe the object of the interaction as natural or social, the basic generation of meaning is always social, for the meanings with which we are endowed arise in and out of interactive human communities...The social world and the natural world are not to be seen, then, as distinct worlds existing side by side. They are one human world’.

This is useful as both elements of the environment are recognized within this study. Meaning is not arbitrarily assigned, but negotiated by individuals and groups in relation to the environment to which they are part.

The exact understanding of constructionism varies between authors, used for example by Crotty to be a theoretical perspective drawing upon subjectivist epistemology, for example a multitude of post-modernisms. For some a distinction is made between constructionism and constructivism. For Crotty, constructionism should be reserved for thinking that emphasizes the group, or social nature of meaning construction, and constructivism for emphasizing the individual. Others (e.g. Hutchings, 2002) use 'social constructivism' to mean Crotty's 'constructionism'. In this research constructionism is the chosen term applied to avoid overlap in the education context with constructivist / social constructivist theories of learning, in a Vygotskian sense. However, constructivist learning theory *is* relevant to this study since it 'states that knowledge is constructed through our past experiences which are place bound' (Szabo and Golden, 2016 p.22). In terms of child-environment interaction and knowledge it emphasises children's active engagement. 'The place is not an objective phenomenon rather it has to be interpreted and reconstructed by children. Thus children's development of sense of place needs to be viewed as a dynamic process of children's experiencing, interacting, and sense-making' (Lim and Barton, 2010 p.329). A constructionist epistemology allows me to consider that different children construct different meanings as they engage with the same place. Some of these may be entirely individual, others shared and formalized by discourses of learning. I would, however, like to note that I am not associating my research with an

extreme relativist view of knowledge and experience, where all constructions are considered equally valid. In a practical sense an evaluation of right / wrong can be made, in an ethical context. This allows me as teacher-researcher to challenge, for example, constructions of the local environment and place which are embedded in xenophobic discourses.

Constructions of place are conceptualized as partial, incomplete to a greater or lesser extent, and fundamentally dynamic. I suggest that learning about place and the local environment is produced through engagement between culturally situated objects (teachers, friends, classmates, parents, significant people in the community including 'host' country nationals, staff at home) and the 'object' (the local environment – in a human, physical and non-physical sense – although Anthropocene proponents (see Somerville, 2016) would certainly argue that people *are* nature and therefore *part of* the environment). The process of representation is not an arbitrary assignation of meaning, but involves engagement with the object. Indeed, any formulation of local place has ontological implications.

### **5.1.3 Theoretical perspective**

Theoretical perspectives are essentially the 'stance' that lies behind the chosen methodology. Interpretivism is the most compatible and appropriate theoretical perspective within which this study can be situated. There are a number of elements of interpretivism that are applicable and relevant to this research. Firstly, interpretivism acknowledges differences in meaning between people. This is significant in this research insofar as I am exploring both the individual and collective understandings and experiences children have of their local environment and place. This exploration of both individual and collective is a result of the methods used, co-analysis with participants and my conceptualization of place experiences as being both individual / subjective and shared. Secondly, I recognize that through my research I am changing the situation in which the children experience and perceive their environment. Thus, the relationship between myself, the children and the environment is viewed as unstable, and accepted as such. Reflexivity is a central concern here – if knowledge is taken to be socially and culturally constructed in timespace then my own knowledges and experiences must be acknowledged and reflected upon, complicated by the geometries of power within the research. Finally, I am interested in the experiences and meaning that the children attach to their local area, within the context of NQC. This is concurrent with interpretivism insofar as it is

concerned with the meaning dimension. In ontological terms, the nature of children's environment / place experience is viewed as embodied, multi-faceted and specific to time and space. Thus it is something entirely impossible to replicate – it is by nature unique. The issue of generalization and external validity will be discussed later, but it should be noted that generalization from such experiences would detract from the children's subjectivities. Where I do seek to tentatively generalize is more at the theoretical level – this is valuable insofar as these assertions can be considered, tentatively, in further research in similar contexts.

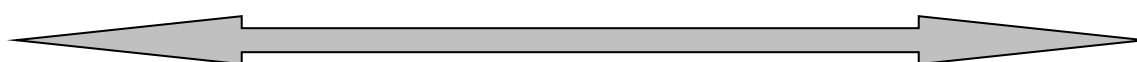
Further exploring the role of interpretivism in this research there are three main strands to consider: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and hermeneutics. Symbolic interactionism relates to interpreting interpersonal events and actions. With reference to phenomenology, Crotty (p.79) writes that cultural heritage pre-empts 'the task of meaning making so that, for the most part, we simply do not do what constructivism describes us doing. Phenomenology, however, invites us to do it. It requires us to engage with phenomena in our world and make sense of them directly and immediately.' This seems appropriate where the children have daily direct experience with their local area. Hermeneutics focuses more on meaning within language and texts. My data is multi-textual – visual, oral, written – some take a broad view of what texts constitute (Ricoeur, 1981). Perhaps it is best to conclude that with reference to the different sub-strands of interpretivism, no one fits my research perfectly. However, arguably phenomenology, with its focus on lived experience (see Seamon, 2013), and hermeneutics with its concern for texts, most closely align with my research. Fundamentally, the holism inherent in interpretivism emphasizes socio-cultural context which is appropriate to my research.

#### **5.1.4 Methodology**

With reference to methodology, grounded theory was considered, whose origin lies in symbolic interactionism. Grounded theory certainly has influenced my process of analysis and theorizing, where theory emerges out of the process of data coding and categorisation. However, as a 'teacher researcher', and member of the community under study deeply embedded in the case, it was decided that I held too many pre-conceived ideas for this to be an appropriate methodology. Some elements of bricoleur can be seen in my research, in particular the use of multiple methods / a mosaic approach, but this is too planned to be applied. Case study was decided to be most appropriate, but not in the sense that Crotty sees it, that is as method,

instead I am referring to case study in the sense it is understood by Yin, Bassey and Stake – as 'the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods' (Crotty's definition of methodology p.3).

Case study is an approach for the selection of cases and the collection of data and involves the investigation of a relatively small number of naturally occurring cases (Hammersley, 1992 p.185). In the context of education, a case could be a school, class or individual. Case study is most appropriate for research questions focused on explanation (Yin, 2003). As Merriam (1998 p.27) observes 'the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case', although this is an idea I will later challenge. Case study research can produce extremely lucid and thorough accounts of cases, but are often criticized for the researcher's influence on a small number of cases (Hammersley, 1992). Writers have distinguished between a number of different types of case studies (see Table 12), with this research simultaneously aligning to Bassey's (1999) story-telling case study, Stake's (1995) intrinsic case study and Yin's (2003) descriptive case study. However, I am interested in the substantive elements of the children's constructions of their local area, but also in a tentative fashion the processes of the development of these constructions shifting more towards Stake's instrumental case study. In terms of justification of the selection of case, Bassey (1999) emphasizes that it should be interesting (place, class, curriculum). However, typicality is sometimes cited as an important justification of case study selection.



Informed by a more  
positivist theoretical  
perspective

Informed by a more  
interpretivist theoretical  
perspective

Yin	Bassey	Stake
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explanatory/causal</li> <li>• descriptive</li> <li>• exploratory</li> </ul> (Yin 2003, p39-47)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theory seeking/testing</li> <li>• story-telling/picture-drawing</li> <li>• evaluative</li> </ul> (Bassey 1999 p62-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intrinsic</li> <li>• instrumental</li> <li>• collective</li> </ul> (Stake 1995 p3-4; Stake 2000 p437)

*Table 12: types of case studies*

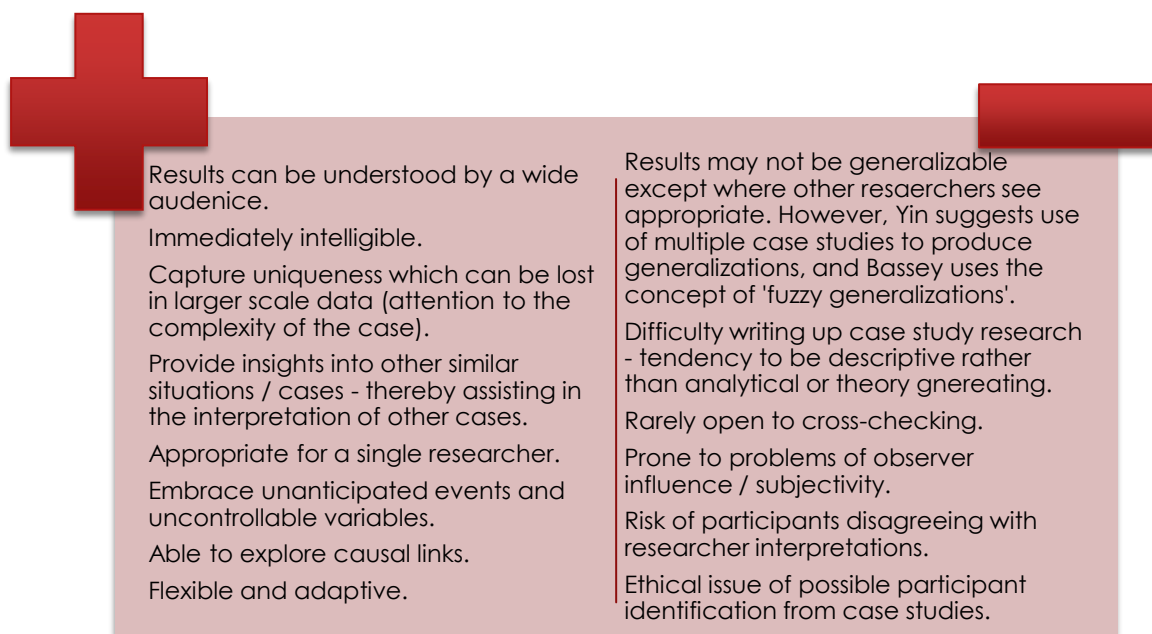


Two broad definitions have been put forward by advocates of case study research. Bassey (1999, p.30) describes the case as the analysis of an instance in action and what are called 'bounded systems'. Here, a case study is 'a study of any individual persons, organizations, communities or societies' which allows for theory development (Stoecker, 1991 p.88). Walker's (1986 p.33) definition is however different, describing a case study in terms of the 'examination of an instance in action' – a study of the particular with the collection of data where the emphasis is on meaning, intention and value. Hammersley's (1992 p.184) definition is useful considering a case as 'the phenomenon (located in space / time) about which data are collected and / or analysed, and that corresponds to the type of phenomena which the main claims of a study relate'. Stake (1988, 1995) also emphasizes the boundedness of a case – by time or space – a 'story about a bounded system' (Stake, 1988 p.256). For Yin (2003 p.13–14) there are some key features of case study research. These include real-life contexts, a wide range of variables influencing phenomena, boundaries between cases and context (not always clear), the use of multiple methods and often the use of prior theoretical propositions to guide research.

The levels of boundedness are plural in this research, with boundaries by class, year group, the school itself, and the physical boundedness of the local environment in a GC, yet global connectedness as a site of a largely transnational expatriate population. The context is unique and particular to the place, but the context is one which exists in similar forms elsewhere – as noted previously, gated communities and expatriate enclaves are a growing global phenomena. However, fundamentally, because of my emphasis on the particular, case study research is an appropriate form of research to describe, explain and generate theory about childhood place experience. It is this theory generation as opposed to theory testing, which draws this case study towards grounded theory where theory is emergent, arising from the data, through co-analysis with participants, with generalised categories of place experience emerging as a system of data categorisation by participants themselves. Case studies are themselves bound in description of the particular – and in this case of experiences of particular locality / place. As written about previously, other examples of case studies of children's experiences of place exist from a variety of contexts. Understanding childhood place experience in the context of an expatriate gated

expatriate community is valuable in its uniqueness – it contrasts with existing case studies, contributing to knowledge and understanding of childhood experience.

However, case study research has faced criticism. As a methodology it has many fundamental strengths and weaknesses. These are summarized in Figure 16.



*Figure 16: case study strengths and weaknesses (Adapted from Adelman et al, 1980; Stenhouse, 1985; Yin, 1993; Stake, 1995; Simons, 1989, Anderson, 1990).*

The key benefits of using a case study approach in this study are the ability to capture uniqueness, its embracing of uncontrollable variables (and therefore uncertainty) and appropriateness for a single researcher. Case study methodology allows me to analyse a particular case (a class / classes, in both Phases 1 and 2) of students and their experiences of their local environment, in detail. As a methodology it also allows me to investigate contemporary phenomena within its real-life context, and is particularly useful when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, or in this case completely entwined.

## **5.2 Qualitative methods**

Within an interpretivist case study the methods chosen are qualitative. They have been selected to collect data that enables me to answer my research questions, while also being ethical and suitable for use with children. Analysis and coding of data is participatory with the children as part of the verification process. There is an emphasis on visual methods both because they are often appropriate methods for children to use, but also because they offer an alternative to text-based methods for participants who speak English as an additional language – 93% of students at NQIS speak English as a second / additional language. While social scientific research has tended to privilege words and numbers in data collection, visual methods acknowledge that in our experience of the world other senses, which may be better (re)-presented in alternative forms. Recently there has been growing interest in the design of sensory research methods with more focus on the visible, audible and touchable (Back, 2007).

The methods used are map drawing (free-hand), concept mapping, photovoice, focus groups (primarily for co-analysis, data verification and feedback with participants) and walking as method (P2 only). In order to allow me to use in-depth qualitative methods, the case in Phase 1 (P1) was limited to one class in Year 9 representing the end of middle childhood, and two classes in P2, balancing the need to broaden the case, but also keep it manageable in terms of data collection and analysis. P1 conducted between January – February 2011 aimed to problematise my research questions and methodology, as well as generate data to be analysed – hence it has not been framed as a pilot study, but rather the first phase of research. Data collected during P1 has highlighted interesting issues to be further explored in P2. In P2 the data collection was repeated with modifications and additions (such as walking as method (after Cele, 2006), as well as follow-up work with P1 participants (focus groups).

## **5.3 Distinguishing between Phase 1 and Phase 2:**

As noted above, P1 of the study aimed to problematise my original research questions and to explore the feasibility and validity of the methods whilst also providing meaningful data to be used towards answering my research questions. While not a pilot study *per se*, as the results are being used to inform theory generation, P1 of the research project was a preliminary stage of research.

Along with the review of literature, P1 helped to highlight some of the substantive and methodological issues to be considered when designing methods to explore children's experience of place, and as a result of P1, 'walking as method' (Cele, 2006) was introduced in P2 to allow further triangulation of data. While maps, concept maps, and photographs provided vivid insights into children's place experience, particular in terms of their interaction with physical space, and their conceptions of the environment (physical, socio-cultural and emotional), it was felt a further exploration of actually lived space would be beneficial. The incorporation of data collection in-place, that is in-situ and in real time, was seen as a powerful means of gaining deeper insights into the participants environmental experiences. P2 included a larger sample size working with two classes in tandem, and follow up work with P1 participants as they moved from Year 9 to Year 10 in the school. The phases are summarised in Figure 17.

Within both P1 and P2 the 'small' focus group interviewees were volunteers. In P1 six children volunteered to give up lunchtimes and time afterschool, in P2 five children volunteered from each class. Rather than try to create a representative group in terms of nationality and gender it was felt that, for ethical reasons, it was better to encourage volunteers since data collection would involve missing lunch breaks and time after school.

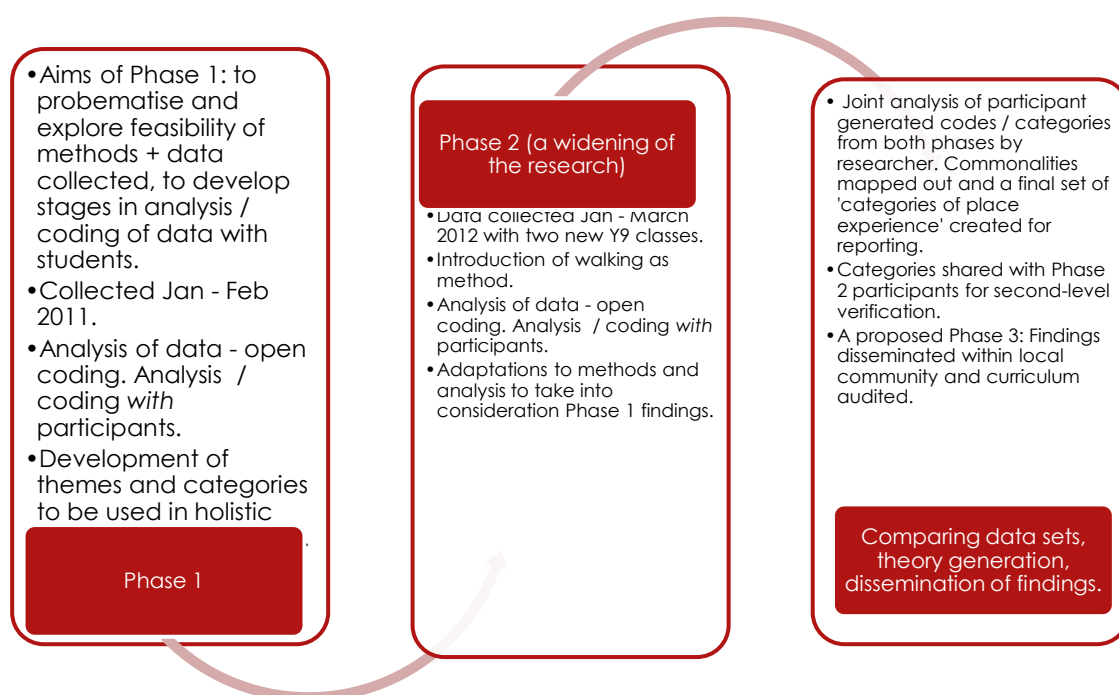


Figure 17: Distinguishing between phases in research

While the two phases are conceptualised as the same 'case', the broadening of the case, in the words of Miles and Huberman (1994, p.26) offers 'even deeper understanding of process and outcome of cases, the chance to test (not just develop hypotheses), and a good picture of locally grounded theory'.

## **5.4 Choice of case and classes**

NQIS (British Stream) was selected because of my role as Middle School Head of Humanities. Permission to undertake research was granted by the community director, education manager and school Principal who were aware of my PhD candidature. As a teacher-researcher, gaining permission to access classes was not an issue (although informed consent was of course a requirement), and as Head of Department I had authority to adapt the curriculum timing in order to collect some of the data during class time, although much was collected during lunchtimes and after school to avoid curriculum disruption.

It is important to note that NQIS is split into two geographically and administratively distinct schools – the English National Curriculum 'British Stream', and the separate Indian-curriculum 'Indian Stream'. All Indian passport holders attend the Indian Stream, and all other nationalities the British Stream. Research with students in the Indian Stream was not possible due to Head teacher concerns of loss of instructional time for students, in school with a strong focus on examinations. This is unfortunate as contrasting the place experiences of children living within the same bounded community but attending different schools would have provided fascinating insights into the role of education and culture in place experience.

Research was undertaken with Year 9 (students aged 13 – 14) for three key reasons. Firstly it was decided that an age group at the end of middle childhood / beginning of adolescence, having gained greater geographical mobility, would be able to recall their local environment more effectively than younger children<sup>2</sup>. They have, for the most part, been resident in NQC for sufficient time to have developed a strong sense of place and place understanding. This does not suggest that younger children

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<sup>2</sup> In the study participants are interchangeably referred to as children/participants/adolescents/teenagers. As 13-14 year olds the participants arguably occupy a space between childhood and adolescence, meaning a variety of terms are possible. Some writers like Maxey (2004) and Aitken (2001) prefer the term 'younger people' to emphasise agency, fluidity of identities and competence.

cannot express their experiences of the local environment, or that understanding these is unimportant, but simply that their experience of their local environment is limited in comparison with older children with greater independent mobility. Secondly, Year 9 students in British curriculum schools represent the final stage of KS3 - the last period of compulsory formal geographical education in schools following the National Curriculum of England. After Year 9 geography education becomes optional at GCSE level. The implications of this are that those students who have been at NQIS for several years will have experienced a range of geographical education experiences and have a level of geographical competence to consider their spatial practices, identities and take part in the process of data interpretation – as a research project incorporating co-analysis of data this was significant. The analysis of data with the students, although certainly possible with younger children, requires a geographical lexis and imagination that is more likely to be developed with Year 9 students than younger children. Finally, middle childhood or early adolescence is a significant time in a child's life in terms of developing independence and freedom. While younger children may experiment with the physical landscape more freely and in a more embodied way, older children are more likely to have awareness of the complexities of the socio-cultural landscape of place, an area of interest to me as a researcher and teacher. Writers such as Spencer and Blades (2005) and Chawla (2002) consider adolescents needs as unaddressed in (urban) planning. They question whether spaces are created that allow enough flexibility for adolescents to shape places to meet their own needs. Some such spaces are adapted from 'childhood' spaces like subversive use of playgrounds, others commercially provided like cafes or youth clubs. School and home are also of course significant. Like Horelli (2005) and Barratt Hacking & Barratt (2009), I am interested in how understanding the experiences of adolescents, helps adults understand their needs and allows participants to communicate their ideas to decision-makers who can help make change happen.

Specific classes were chosen based on practical considerations and the need to be broadly representative of the school. While generalizing in a statistical sense is not an aim of this research, I still felt it necessary for the chosen classes to at least be broadly representative of the school community and year level as a whole. At the time of research I taught two Year 9 classes in both P1 and P2. I wanted to work with classes I taught to avoid disruption to other teachers, and I also felt that my knowledge of the children as their teacher would add richness to the research having developed a trusting relationship with the participants. Gaining permission to take

students out of class from other teachers would have been problematic and disruptive. In P1 I had a choice of two classes to work with – 9A and 9C. The decision to work with 9C was based on the composition of the class insofar as it was felt to better represent the variety of nationalities attending NQIS and was balanced in terms of male/female split. In P2 I worked with both of my allocated teaching classes eliminating the choice. Despite this, both broadly represented a ‘typical’ ethnic mix found in the school. Table 13 summarizes some of the demographics of the classes making up the case.

Phase	Male-female ratio	Nationalities	Residential location
<b>P1</b>	8 male 7 female	6 Indonesian 4 Malaysian 2 Jordanian (1 of Palestinian heritage) 1 Qatari 1 Pakistani 1 South African	14 NQC 1 in Al Khor Town
<b>P2 (9A)</b>	11 male 7 female	6 Indonesian 4 Malaysian 2 Jordanian (Palestinian heritage) 2 British 2 Qatari 1 South African 1 New Zealand	16 NQC 2 Al Thakira (both Qatari)
<b>P2 (9C)</b>	15 male 10 female	10 Indonesian 5 Malaysian 4 British (1 dual nationality UK-Australia) 2 Filipino 2 Qatari 1 New Zealand 1 Pakistani	24 NQC 1 Al Khor Town

*Table 13: Participant demographics by class*

## **5.5 The ‘case as space’**

For Yin and Stake bounding of the case is important – the case should be concrete; bounded in space and time. The case in this study was in P1 one class and in P2 two classes. A class includes teacher-researcher (myself) and the children, and teaching assistant, if applicable. It includes the environment in which they live and is bounded by their own lives. The case, on a superficial level, is easy to bound in terms of time and space – it comprises a specific group of children who meet in a specific place at a specific time for class. However, as a group made up of individuals it is hard to bound – Goode & Hatt (in Stake 2005) note that ‘it is not always easy for the case researcher to recognize where the child ends and the environment begins’ (p.444).

So when one considers that their place experiences (local and distant) and learning (formal and informal) each individual can be seen in participating in many groups, relationships, contexts and networks inside school and outside – they are bound up in complex interactions with the living and non-living elements of their physical and socio-cultural 'environment'. For some sections it was impractical to work with all students, for example interviews and focus groups so instead these were conducted with smaller groups. Therefore, in this research the class is the case in general, but there is focus on individuals and groups at certain points. For example, in my reporting of findings I select specific participants to highlight certain categories and subcategories of place experience, subcategories being developed by myself rather than participants. However, the case is not conceptualized as individual (as in Hopwood, 2007).

Following Taylor (2009b, 2013) in her case study examining Year 9 children's constructions of distant place, a characteristic of this research is the transfer of Doreen Massey's (2005) theorisation of place as a 'bundle of trajectories' to justify use of an interpretive case study approach. Massey's theory shapes my own theorising about the case as space (Taylor, 2009b; 2013). For Massey, place is a meeting place ('bundle') of living and non-living things each having its own particular trajectory – a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005 p.12). Taylor (2009b) and Massey (2005) identify trajectories as the irreversible temporal and spatial 'journeys' people or things have made to reach a given point, and also those future 'journeys'. A key implication of theorizing local place as 'a story-so-far' rather than something fixed and static is that experiences of it must therefore not be viewed as fixed. This is an illuminating way to think of the case as space, in Massey's formulation 'a bundle of trajectories'. This primarily helps me to express my own positioning as a researcher within the project and emphasize the dynamic, concrete nature of working with classes as cases. However, conceptualizing the case as space also has implications for analysis, choice of methods and the role of two phases in terms of authority in the case (Taylor, 2013). The case, as Taylor puts it, is both bigger than we think, and relationally complex. It is dynamic and far from stable which has methodological and epistemological implications – it is impossible to encounter the same place twice meaning that using positivistic methods to ascertain a singular truth about place / place experience is not possible. With reference to children's understandings of distant place, Taylor notes that if children's representations 'are partial, context-dependent, and liable to change over time, then inconsistencies



within a person's representations between different data sources, even those made on the same day, may be regarded as interesting rather than problematic'.

Taylor proposes three key implications of conceptualizing the case as space. Firstly, as explained the case is complex and diverse, meaning that multiple methods are needed to help understand different aspects of children's understanding of place, be it distant or local place. Secondly, as place and case are viewed as a unique bundle of trajectories (past, present and future), data collection methods exploring relationships and connections are needed (for example concept mapping). Finally, in terms of mapping power geometries in the case it is impossible to be within the case space (as local resident, teacher, researcher) and not be a member of its bundle of trajectories. I alter the case by being present and a part of it, but at the same time abiding by the norms of being an assistive adult – giving guidance, challenging xenophobia and maintaining discipline as a teacher. As part of the case it is also logical to speculate that ethical considerations not only be applied to the participants (the focus of the study) but also myself, an idea developed by Heshusius (1994) with reference to participatory consciousness.

## **5.6 *Placing myself within the case***

Developing some of the ideas above I would like to give some context to my understanding of myself within the case. The role of researcher in case studies can be described as participant or non-participant (or insider / outsider), and is somewhat problematic in this case as both teacher and researcher. Qualitative case study research can increase trustworthiness through transparency. With critics of case study research questioning issues of generalizability, validity and reliability (linked to the central role of the researcher in the research process) this is particularly important. To a certain extent this can be overcome with a greater degree of participation from those involved in the research (for example in the analysis and coding of data and dissemination of findings) as these increase transparency of the research process to those involved and allow for ongoing verification of findings. Perhaps the key critique of case studies is subjectivity and the influence of private knowledge (Diamond, 1996). Despite this, it is the belief within this research that with transparency in the research process and co-verification of findings with participants that these issues can be managed. Often case study researchers report that their

preconceived ideas are proved incorrect through their research, forcing them to revise their hypotheses and thinking (for example, Campbell, 1975; Wieviorka, 1992).

However, as previously explored with reference to Massey's theorizing of space and place, and how this is reconceptualized with reference to case study research by Taylor (2009, 2011), the distinction between the 'case' and the 'researcher' is not necessarily useful. Rather it is better to see myself as a part of the case – my presence (or absence) makes me part of the case, part of the bundle of trajectories making both place and the case. As a teacher in the school, and resident of the community, my presence in a small way helps make the place, enmeshing me as a part of the bundle of trajectories making up place and the case. Here, the potential for 'participatory consciousness' as a way of thinking is postulated. While a participatory mode of consciousness is applied by Heshuthius (1994) in the context of data collection, I see value in extending the concept across the research process to include analysis too, especially where this is participatory. This is the application of the theory in a more epistemological sense. Lee (2014) used participatory consciousness as epistemological way of knowing. In her research about school-based environmental groups, she demonstrated a means of understanding knowledge to be what she could attain through *participating* in the activities that the children carried out. This is a conceptualization of researcher as participant, and therefore at the same 'level' as participants, meaning ethics must be applied to the researcher in the same way as to participants. This means the data she collected included her own insider knowledge of the activities as participant, and her knowledge of the children as co-participants. While not a participant in the research, I do consider myself part of the case, and as a teacher with knowledge of the children and context prior to formally conducting research.

## **5.7 Trustworthiness**

The concept of trustworthiness fits better than validity and reliability in context of interpretive case study. Ideas of replication and reliability are inappropriate insofar as another researcher undertaking research would have been part of the case in a completely different way. Similarly, my conceptualization of place (and the case) as dynamic means that to return to the same case later is in fact impossible – the case and place would have changed, with new bundles of trajectories. Just as Massey talks of the 'process of place' unfolding over time, here we have the process of

case(s) unfolding and changing over time. Instead, multi-methods and co-analysis are important tools to enhance trustworthiness. By triangulating, or crystallizing, data differences between understandings between data are not problematic, but interesting. I am not seeking a single view of place, but multiple.

Therefore, in naturalistic and interpretivist studies, the goal is not external validity in the traditional sense, instead it is internal validity:

'The interpretivist rejects generalisation as a goal and never aims to draw randomly selected samples of human experience. For the interpretivist every instance of social interaction, if thickly described (Geertz, 1973), represents a slice from the life world that is the proper subject matter for interpretative inquiry... Every topic... must be seen as carrying its own logic, sense of order, structure and meaning' (Denzin, 1983 p.133-4)

Cohen *et al* (2000) explain two key types of validity within educational research. Similarly, Bassey (1999, 2003) outlines some of the important features of good educational case study research. Included are trustworthiness (validity and reliability), ethical conduct, a significant research outcome for one or more audiences and meaningful and readable reporting for different audiences (anticipated journal publication and reporting of findings to curriculum developers and decision-makers at NQIS / in NQC). Lincoln and Guba (1985) develop ideas of trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry. Trustworthiness is understood to offer alternatives, in the context of qualitative inquiry, to positivist ideas of validity and reliability. As Bassey notes, building on ideas from Lincoln and Guba, both validity and reliability are problematic concepts when applied to case study research.

Reliability is understood here to be the extent to which research findings can be repeated, given similar or the same circumstances (Milne, 2008). However, as noted, the conceptualization of the case as space puts such ideas into dispute, where uniqueness and change are emphasized. Indeed, with my conceptualization of the case as space, and therefore the case as process, repeating findings is not necessarily possible, nor desirable. Validity is the extent to which a research finding is in reality what it is claimed to be (Bassey, 1999). However, in the context of qualitative case study research, this does not of course mean the same results would be found in all (similar) cases. Therefore, related to this are the issues of

generalization and construct validity. The extent to which findings from case study research can be applied to new and different contexts is in essence generalizability. Yin (2003 p 35) also refers to construct validity which is confidence in the actual process of data collection. Construct validity in this case has been improved through co-interpretation and coding of data with the children. Through this process and discussions the risk of misrepresentation is, if not eliminated, reduced. Validity is also improved through use of multiple methods and triangulation. However, I am aware that respondent validation and triangulation does not guarantee trustworthiness, insofar as it (respondent validation / co-analysis) assumes the reality of respondents accounts as something fixed and out there rather than a process of meaning making that is in actual fact contextual and fluctuating. I would contend that each method used allows the children to explore different aspects of place experience, ex-situ and in-situ (walking in P2).

### **5.7.1 Enhancing trustworthiness in the research process**

The assessment of trustworthiness in naturalistic qualitative work is often questioned by positivists. There is a clash between the ways in which concepts of validity and reliability are used in social and physical sciences (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln & Guba's (1985) four criteria to be considered by researchers to assess research trustworthiness are a useful starting point. These criteria are adopted from positivist research (in brackets):

- a) credibility (c.f. internal validity);
- b) transferability (c.f. preference to external validity/generalisability);
- c) dependability (c.f. preference to reliability);
- d) confirmability (c.f. preference to objectivity).

Strategies which I have used to ensure trustworthiness are:

- Triangulation – use of multiple methods, visual, textual and verbal to elicit uncover place experience.
- Combined various forms of interview and focus groups – group, student and staff. Walks have also been a form of in-situ interview / conversation.
- Informal sharing of findings and discussions with other staff members at NQIS – as ‘critical friends’.

- Use of a research diary / journal to track my thinking during the research process.
- Adoption of elements of co-research with the children – particularly in the initial stages of analysis and coding and through use of child-friendly methods.

Bassey (1999 p 75) outlines eight key questions for researchers to consider to ensure trustworthiness. These are summarized below and cross referenced with this research.

<i>Collection of data</i>	
<b>1) Has there been prolonged engagement with the data sources?</b>	Yes – one year of data collection, further 4 during which analysis took place. Researcher part of wider community.
<b>2) Has there been persistent observation of emerging issues?</b>	Yes – in both collection of data and analysis.
<b>3) Have raw data been sufficiently checked with sources?</b>	Yes – co-analysis of data with participants is an important aspect of the research.
<i>Analysis of data:</i>	
<b>4) Has there been sufficient triangulation of data?</b>	Yes, however triangulation in the context of this research is best not seen as a tool to elicit a singular objective understanding of place, but rather a tool to uncover the variety of understandings of experiences of place children have.
<i>Interpretation of analytical statements:</i>	
<b>5) Has the working hypothesis / emerging story been tested against analytical statements?</b>	Analytical statements from other studies (for example Christensen <i>et al</i> 2014) have been considered against data in this study.
<b>6) Has a critical friend tried to challenge analytical statements?</b>	Yes – during doctoral research process, supervisions, transfer seminar, drafting.
<b>7) Is the account of the research detailed enough to give readers confidence in findings?</b>	Thesis has tried to balance breadth and depth to explore the complexities of the case under study. Analysis is participatory, theorising is <i>from</i> and <i>with</i> data presented.
<b>8) Does the case study record provide an appropriate audit trail?</b>	Indicative data is provided within thesis. Own record of data maintained.

*Table 14: Bassey's trustworthiness questions*

## 5.8 Generalisation

There are a number of ways generalisation in case study research can be conceptualized. Bassey distinguishes between statistical vs. fuzzy generalizations, Stake between petite and grand where petite generalizations are statements for within the case and grande outside. He suggests these are made by the reader (naturalistic generalization) as the researcher's assertions reinforce their own experience and ideas. However, arguably key to generalizations from case study research are the modesty of claims, for example Yin's generalization to theory. Stake emphasizes the importance of generalizations focusing on the uniqueness of the

case and complexities, rather than what cases have in common (p.105). I am primarily making petite generalizations for the case but suggesting possible commonalities with other contexts. All concepts of generalisation above move away from the idea of generalisation in a strictly scientific sense. In all cases the language is at best cautious – for example Stake's petite generalization is taken as some kind of recurrent feature in a case on a small scale, where grand generalizations were bigger statements about issues highlighted in the case. Stake (1995, p.12) later advocated more tentative assertions as the best outcome for case study research:

'It is not uncommon for case study researcher to make assertions on a relatively small database, invoking the privilege and responsibility of interpretation. To draw so much attention to interpretation may be a mistake, suggesting that case study work hastens to conclusions. Good case study is patient, reflective, willing to see another view of the case. An ethic of caution is not contradictory to an ethic of interpretation.'

Clearly case study research and generalization have an uneasy relationship. Despite this, a number of ideas have emerged regarding the role of case studies in wider generalizations. As mentioned previously, Bassey's (1993, 1999) response to the issue of external validity in case studies is for a departure away from a scientific understanding of generalizations. His term 'fuzzy generalization' is best described as a general statement with build-in uncertainty, with acceptance and full acknowledgement that there will be exceptions and alternatives. They are described as 'the kind of prediction, arising from empirical enquiry, that says that something may happen, but without any measure of its probability. It is a qualified generalization, carrying the idea of possibility but no certainty' (Bassey, 1999 p.46). Therefore, it is through the collective study of singularities and collection of data that ultimately supports (or rejects) theory generated from case studies. Stake's (1995) concept of assertions and naturalistic generalizations is useful, where assertions are proposed generalizations. Fundamentally, for Stake, generalizations are not appropriate from single case studies, but rather knowledge and understanding should be combined with other case studies. Critics of case study still affirm that theory generated from interpretivist case studies should, more accurately, be framed as speculation or positions rather than theory. Perhaps the best advice is for caution in generalization from the case for anything beyond the case.

I recognize that generalizing from research that is contextual, and where I am a teacher-researcher, is difficult. In this case the boundaries between the research and my professional practice and even my everyday life are blurred, in some senses drawing the research towards being somewhat ethnographic. Despite this, I believe the process of co-analysis and co-verification of findings with participants does allow generalization *for the case*. It has always been an aim of this research, as a theory-generating case study rather than theory-testing, to theorise children's environmental experiences in the context of the case, and apply these findings in a meaningful way. Ideally, this sets up the potential for others to test findings in similar (or contrasting) locations and contexts, thereby strengthening theory.

Perhaps some of the best concluding statements with reference to the contentious nature of generalization within case studies comes from Simons (1996), who instead of finding conflict between the singular and the general / singularity and generalization, embraces and welcomes this: 'One of the advantages cited for case study research is its uniqueness, its capacity for understanding complexity in particular contexts' (p.225). Indeed, perhaps we need to 'embrace the paradoxes inherent in the people, events and sites we study and explore rather than try to resolve the tensions embedded in them. ... Paradox for me is the point of case study. Living with paradox is crucial to understanding. The tension between the study of the unique and the need to generalise is necessary to reveal both the unique and the universal and the unity of that understanding. To live with ambiguity, to challenge certainty, to creatively encounter, is to arrive, eventually, at 'seeing' anew. (p.237-238)

This echoes the notion that each case is both completely similar, yet completely different to all other cases. If such a conceptualization of case studies is maintained, then the value of tentative / fuzzy generalizations is clear, where paradoxically the unique and universal unite.

## ***5.9 Ethics in the research: an ongoing process***

The ethical issue of racist assertions was the most significant encountered in the research. The local area is ethnically diverse, and xenophobic cultures emerge from this. A key challenge was the uneasy relationship between the desire to elicit ideas

about place, but at the same time as a geography educator to challenge racist views – but in the knowledge that this would shut down the child's willingness to tell me what they really thought. Methods were open, and therefore reference to nationality and race emerged, as they did in conversations and focus groups. Where I felt comments were derogatory I challenged these. In my role as teacher-researcher I had an ethical need to safeguard those with less power. While this does mean I influenced what the children shared, this is arguably the case in all research.

In terms of power in the thesis I have put some emphasis on myself, and my own childhood experiences of place inspired by Hart's (1979) reflections. Co-analysis led to a shift in power away from researcher to participants. However, in my choice of which literature to refer to, and which to omit I am giving voices to certain theory and perspectives, and my choice of children's data exemplification in Chapter 9, is another example of power dynamics in the thesis. The thesis can also be viewed as a space of representation of the case, and also conceptualized as a 'bundle of trajectories' with different voices (academic, the children, my own) given the opportunity (or not) to speak (Taylor, 2010). Any thesis is selective, in terms of theory explored and data presented, and this is openly acknowledged here. Thus it is at the point of writing, now, that geometries of power are most biased towards myself as researcher and writer. Small gifts were given to key participants, and the study concluded with a year group off-site visit, partly inspired by the results of the study. Any gifts / incentivisation was not discussed before the study to avoid incentivisation.

### **5.9.1 Gatekeepers**

Before undertaking research permission was sought from two school leaders at NQIS – the Education Manager (directly employed by the gas companies and taking overall charge of the school), and the Secondary school Principal. The community director, also employed by the gas companies and responsible for the day-to-day running of the community and grounds, was also consulted. This was important, as it is primarily through the Community Manager, along with the Education Manager and Principal, that research findings are reported back to the community.

### **5.9.2 BERA**

This research operates with voluntary informed and written consent (BERA, 2004). At all times the unique cultural context of Qatar and a multicultural community were



considered and reflected upon, in particular Islamic cultural values and how these might impact consideration of ethical research as an on-going process throughout the research and writing up of this thesis. Parents of the children in both Phases were informed, via letter (see Appendix 1), of the research and given the opportunity to withdraw their child from the research. The letter was signed by both parents and children. However, the issue of consent is an ongoing one in research. In this sense it is dynamic, and complicated by my status as teacher as well as researcher. Further, the children were given information about the research and given the right to withdraw. The right to withdraw was regularly reminded to the participants, although none asked this. In both Phases no parent withdrew their child, and all of the students consented to take part. The letter and explanation to children was in all cases explicit in stating that they need not answer or take part in anything that feels uncomfortable for them and that they may withdraw at any time (right to withdraw – BERA). My role was transparent as both teacher and researcher (deception protocol - BERA) and focused on respecting the participants' voices (responsibility to participants – BERA). Participants have given themselves pseudonyms, and any data which may compromise them as individuals has been excluded from this thesis. I intersubjectively discussed data and findings with participants during the data collection and co-analysis, which therefore decreased possible perceptions of power inequality in the process. Their involvement in data interpretation and coding is central to this process of making the research more participatory. However, in the context of teacher-researcher, power inequality is of course a key concern which will be discussed now. Three key issues emerged from this research with regard to ethical considerations.

### **5.9.3 Researching everyday life and experiences**

Asking children to consider their experiences of place has the potential to cause psychological harm, since it encompasses sense of place, identity and belonging. This was minimized through informed consent and by having the school counsellor review choice of students to participate in more in-depth focus groups and be aware of the research. Any study exploring everyday life and experiences has the potential to cause trauma. Indeed, related issues for TCKs of belonging and identity are also sensitive areas. Aspects of the study did involve discussion of sensitive issues, the most significant of which was discussion of 'un-Islamic' behavior of some students, such as some students drinking alcohol. Where very sensitive information emerged, this has been omitted from the thesis, and in some cases transcriptions. Students

discussed their 'secret' places and hangouts – the appropriateness of a teacher knowing such information is potentially inappropriate (Roe, 2007), although given the good relationship between teachers and students in the school this was not seen as a significant issue. Similarly, some girls discussed issues of staring by men (viewed as sexual harassment), a challenging topic to discuss. Participants were frequently reminded that they were in control of what information they chose to reveal or not, and that no aspect of data collection was compulsory or curriculum-related. Opting-out of data collection would not impact class attainment in any way.

#### **5.9.4 Use of photography and participatory methods**

Any photo containing people and private space (e.g. gardens, homes) has ethical implications. Children were specifically asked to get permission from their parents to take the photographs, and if any people were in the image that their permission be sought before taking the photo. Similarly, by engaging with children about their use of place could highlight sensitive issues regarding for example illegal activities (in the context of Qatar in particular). It was explained to the children involved in the research that should any issues of welfare / safety be raised, in my capacity as both researcher and teacher, intervention could be necessary.

#### **5.9.5 Power: teacher and researcher**

My main concern with the teacher/researcher and student/participant relationship was with reference to informed consent. It was always my concern that students would give their consent to take part in the research either because it is undertaken in school and therefore in some way compulsory, or that not taking part would in some way influence their standing in the class or even grades. All these issues were addressed with participants before consent to take part was given.

Co-analysis of data with participants was identified as a key means of reducing power inequality. Reflexivity was also a prerequisite for ethical research. By this I mean careful and consistent awareness of what I was doing / researching, my motivations, and the possible consequences in terms of power relations between myself and the children involved in the study. As previously explored, my positioning of myself as part of the case, rather than something separate from it, means that ethical concerns should be applied not only to participants, but also to myself.

## 5.10 The continuum of participation

A broad aim of the research, developing from my interpretivist stance, is that methodologies, methods and analysis be participatory to some degree. A number of researchers are thirding, or breaking down, the binary between researcher and participant (Helfenbein, 2004). Similarly, notions of researcher as detached and objective are increasingly being reconceptualised in qualitative research in a more nuanced way – with inclusivity, collaboration and participation more frequently explored (see Moles, 2008; Hall *et al*, 2006; McNess *et al*, 2015, Helfenbein, 2004). Hart's (1992, 1997) ladder of participation is a useful tool to conceptualise degrees of participation:

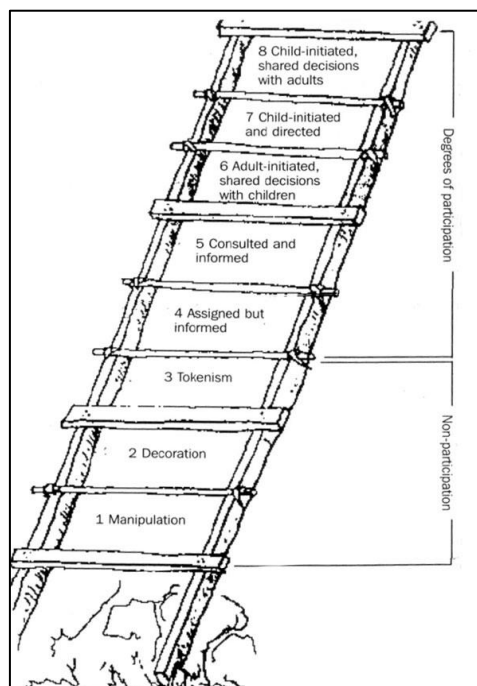
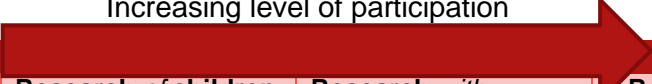


Figure 18: Hart's Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1997, 2008; Cornell University, 2006)

The reasoning behind incorporating a more participatory approach is twofold - to reduce power inequalities, and also to ensure data analysis is meaningful and trustworthy. However, as with any research there is an uneasy relationship between the need on the one hand to collect meaningful data and the challenges – actual and imagined – of relinquishing control of elements of the research process to younger participants.

Barratt Hacking & Barratt's (2007) continuum of research on / with / by children is another useful means of conceptualizing participation in research. Through distinguishing between research of, with and by children, degrees of participation are explored. These are summarized in Table 15 below (from Barratt Hacking & Barratt, 2007):

Increasing level of participation 			
	<b>Research of children</b>	<b>Research with children</b>	<b>Research by children</b>
Language	Child as object, research <i>about</i> children	Child as subject / participant / partner / co-researcher / active.	Child-initiated / child-led / child as researcher
Origins	Developmental psychology, children as progressing from incompetent to competent.	Rights-based 1980s research– children as having rights to be consulted / to be informed / to inform. Children as actors with agency.	Emancipatory community-based research of the 1990s – focus on empowerment of minorities.
Description	Impersonal, passive research. Children listened to, findings accommodated into adult understandings and interpretations.	Can be either mostly adult- or child-led depending on place on continuum. Collaboration in all / some stages of research. Different degrees of responsibility and power.	Children self-motivated, directing research. Responsible for all stages.

*Table 15: Research of, with and by children*

Based on this typology or continuum, my research is best viewed as research *with* children. However, I would suggest that these degrees of participation can vary between different stages of the research process. Thus, a research project may be 'research with children' in one respect (for example, design of methods) and 'research by children' in another (for example dissemination of findings) – this allows for a more fluid and reactive approach to participation, rather than holistic pigeonholing.

Therefore, it is important to locate the precise loci of participation in my research. There are two key junctures in my research where the foci of increased participation lie: 1) the methods themselves (through being place-interactive, open and mostly visual) and 2) through the process of participant analysis, going beyond simple verification of findings. However, it is still problematic placing this research along the continuum of participatory research, insofar as the motivation for the research was directed by myself, the methods were devised by myself and I took a key role in the

final stages analysis, in terms of pulling together and juxtaposing the analysis conducted by the participants.

Participatory research is more generally associated with action research rather than case study research, although Reilly (2010) outlines its potential with case study research, especially critical case study research. While this is case study research, some elements of action research are being adopted, at least insofar as a broad aim is to report findings to local decision-makers and thus potentially influence decision-making and development with the needs of children in mind – something which has been lacking to date in NQC, Qatar and the Middle East more widely. However, affecting change of an identified problem is not the aim of this research, rather uncovering children's experiences of their local environment with the potential for findings to feed back into decision-making is desired.

Reilly (2010) clearly articulates the key elements of participatory case studies and these have been cross-referenced with my research in Table 16.

<i>Guiding principals of participatory case studies</i>	<i>Applicability to my research</i>
<b>Change-orientated methodology between 'insiders' and 'outsider(s)' (researcher).</b>	While change is a possible outcome, it is not the pre-planned outcome of this research. As a resident in NQC at the time of research, and a member of the community, the distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider' is not wholly appropriate. My 'outsideness' emerges from my status as teacher and researcher.
<b>Assumption of equal status of knowledge between participants and researcher.</b>	<p>Children in my research are viewed as experts in their local knowledge and ability to express ideas about their place experience and interpret their data. As James (1990) encourages, a central understanding of this research is that the children involved are the only people truly knowledgeable of their everyday lives and experiences. They bring with them into school and research settings powerful knowledges (Catling &amp; Martin, 2011).</p> <p>However, participants are not seen as experts in applying and layering of theory to data generated and holistically developing categories and themes to interpret data. This is seen as my key role in analysis, albeit one causing significant tension within the research.</p>
<b>Egalitarian roles – boundaries between researcher and participants eliminated or reduced. Traditional researcher-subject/ knowledge-producer – knowledge-consumer broken down.</b>	The challenges of conducting research with students in the role of both teacher and researcher are explored in my ethics section. As Mayall (2000 p.121) notes, 'a central characteristic of adults is that they have power over children'. It is a relationship characterized by unequal power relationships. However, incorporating elements of participatory methods is one way I have tried to reduce this.
<b>Goal of research is to create authentic knowledge which will benefit participants.</b>	<p>It is certainly the goal of this research to be of benefit to the students. The benefits are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive sense of empowerment and knowledge that people are interested in their experiences of place and knowledges.</li> <li>• Heightened understanding and ability to reflect on significance of local area and everyday lives.</li> <li>• Feedback of findings to local decision-makers with the potential of effecting change.</li> <li>• Feedback of findings into curriculum planning within the school to ensure curriculum is tailored to their needs and experiences, in particular with reference to opportunities for PBE and local place exploration in humanities.</li> <li>• Students were given the option of feeding back findings to parents, but declined.</li> </ul>
<b>Methods are sensitive to participants / co-researchers needs, culture, age.</b>	While true participatory research develops methods with participants, I have devised the methods in this research. Despite this, they have been devised to be sensitive to their culture, age and preferences. The repeated confirmation that the children had the right to withdraw added to this.
<b>Research process is inclusive with participation at every stage of process.</b>	This research is not participatory at every stage, notably the planning and latter stages of analysis have been researcher-led. Key junctures of participant-led participation have been in the data collection itself and in their initial coding and analysis of data.
<b>All accounts and reports reflect the perceptions of all stakeholders and are written in everyday language.</b>	The reporting of findings, in this thesis, and in communication with community leaders, aims to reflect a holistic understanding of place experience of all participants insofar as this is possible. The requirement of using 'everyday language' is arguably not a fair requirement for a doctoral thesis where engagement with academic texts, concepts and theories, by their very nature requires use of technical lexis, and is indeed as assessment requirement of PhDs.
<b>Objectivity is not the gold standard – critical subjectivity and reflexivity are valued.</b>	This certainly aligns well with my research where the aim is to account children's own experiences of their local environment, critically and reflexively. Epistemologically this is not a challenging requirement for this research where meaning and experience are viewed as constructed.

*Table 16: Key elements of participatory case studies*

It is clear that there is tension between my desire to be participatory, and the practicalities and realities of my role as teacher-researcher within my own school and the time constraints of doctoral study alongside other commitments. However, despite the clear diversion from some aspects of participatory research, this does not preclude me from adopting elements of participatory research in order to balance ethical issues of power and ensure findings are meaningful through co-interpretation and verification.

Indeed, Thomas & O'Kane (1999, p.336) state that 'the ethical problems in research involving direct contact with children can be overcome by using a participatory approach'. Hart (1997) states that projects initiated by adults, such as this, can in fact be participatory so long as the participant children have been consulted about the process and understood this, and have their ideas, experiences and opinions treated seriously (p.42-44). However, more recent literature, including by Hart, is less condoning of the use of 'participatory' to describe a wide range of research. According to Cahill and Hart (2006) and Kindon *et al* (2007) the term participatory is used somewhat freely for research which is in fact participatory only in a tokenistic way.

Despite the challenges of balancing the desire to initiate participatory research, and practical constraints, there is positive evidence that children's participation in place-based research and decision-making can have positive impacts with local planning and change (CABE, 2004; Barratt Hacking *et al*, 2009). However, such projects have mostly been in Europe and North America. Despite this, in 1982 the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) was established, and the politically-motivated orientation of many participatory research projects fits well with the needs of many communities in Asia and other developing regions. Currently South Asia, notably India, is increasingly seeing the adoption of grass-roots participatory research, many connected with issues of gender inequality and the provision of services in urban and rural areas. In the context of the Gulf, it could be speculated that comfortable lifestyles and materialism detract from community involvement. Despite this, UNICEF's (2000) report on the state of the world's children states with reference to Qatar:

'Qatari organisations attach special importance to providing the child with a safe environment, free from pollution, noise and crowding.

Similarly, great care is taken, to provide a child-friendly environment when designing educational and recreational programmes and institutions. School curricula have also started to deal with environmental education in order to create awareness and foster a healthy orientation relationship between the children and their environment'.

Whilst positive, there is a lack of reference above to children's role in decision-making and planning, something which is seen in other countries (see CAFE, 2004). Arguably, this may be linked to different conceptualizations of childhood and the role of children in society (see El Haddad, 2003), and the rapid pace of change in the country.

### ***5.11 Summary and conclusions***

Chapter 6 has explored a wide range of issues pertaining to ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and ethics. The study has been framed as an interpretivist case study, drawing inspiration from constructionism. The case is theorised less as a bounded entity, but more in terms of Taylor's 'case as space', emphasising flux and change, with implications for how findings are framed. Finally, the participatory nature of the study has been explained, with participation in research conceptualised here not in universal terms, but with reference to levels of participation at specific intersections of research, in this case methods and the early stages of analysis.

Chapter 7 builds on chapter 6 by explaining specific methods used. In each case methods are described and their use in similar studies is outlined.



## Chapter 7: Methods:

This section will explore the methods selected to collect empirical data to answer my research questions. Firstly, a review of methods in other studies exploring childhood place experience will be outlined followed by a justification of my choice of methods. The value of participatory, visual and place-interactive methods will be explored before a detailed analysis of my chosen methods themselves: map drawing, concept mapping, photovoice and walking as method.

### 6.1 *Background - examples of data collection in studies of children's place experience*

Studies exploring children's environmental experiences have tended to use participatory methods, and often adopt a mosaic approach (Roe, 2006). Table 17 summarizes the methods used by some key studies after reviewing literature:

Written	Oral	Visual	Place interactive
Concept mapping (e.g. Somerville & Green, 2015; Sanders, 2016 – more widely used in exploring constructions of distant place than local area, e.g. Picton (2008)) Written accounts of place, or diaries (e.g. Stevens, 2010)	Verbal accounts (e.g. Roe, 2006), interviews, focus groups (e.g. Ibrahim, 2016; Somerville & Green, 2015) – sometimes combining visual, written and place-interactive methods for example discussion of photographs (e.g. Rasmussen, 2004).	Drawing pictures (e.g. Cele, 2006) Drawing maps (e.g. Matthews, 1992) Photo elicitation (e.g. Simkins & Thwaites, 2008) Photovoice (e.g. Rautio, 2015; Cele, 2005; Carter & Ford, 2013)	Walking as method (e.g. Cele, 2005; Roe, 2006; Moles, 2008; Middleton, 2011), photography, drawing.

*Table 17: methods in exploring childhood place experience*

There has been a growing shift from written and oral accounts of place, towards more visual and place interactive ways of eliciting understandings and experiences of place in order to try to capture more authentic data. This study will employ a combination of oral, written, visual and place-interactive methods.

### 6.2 *Methods selection*

In some participatory research projects methods are co-created with researcher and participants (or co-researchers) (Molina *et al*, 2009). While this strategy was

considered, it was decided that to ensure meaningful data was collected, in the time available, that I would devise the appropriate methods to address my research questions. This reflects the challenges and pressures associated of relinquishing control of the research process in participatory research. There is a strong focus on visual methodologies in this research. This is mainly because the majority of students involved in the study speak English as a second language so minimizing the use of language is beneficial.

Four key methods were used in P1 of the research: mapping (free recall), drawings, photovoice, and focus groups. In P2 the addition of walking as a method was introduced to further triangulate results and provide richer and thicker descriptions of the children's worlds. Interviews were conducted with school administrators in P2 also. This multiple methods approach attempts to provide greater validity of data, and thus reinforce findings. Using more than one method allows a richer and more detailed 'picture' of children's worlds to be developed. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of using multiple methods is to see where data produced by the same child diverges / does not coincide.

### **6.2.1 Place-interactive and 'in-situ' methods**

The importance of developing more place interactive methods was highlighted by literature (for example Cele, 2005; Somerville *et al* 2009) and in P1 led to the addition of walking as method in P2. In particular, this was in response to a number of participants articulating that they were struggling to remember aspects of place experiences and their local environment during P1 focus groups. While photovoice was used in P1, I felt it would be beneficial to experience the local environment of the children with them as researcher hence the addition of walking as method, as used by other researchers exploring children's place experiences (Roe, 2006; Cele, 2006). Along with photovoice this is described as a place-interactive method (Cele, 2006) or in-situ method. The degree to which other classroom-based methods (mapping, concept maps, focus groups) are ex-situ is debatable in the context of the research since the school is a pivotal aspect of the local area / environment. The following is an exploration of each method – a description and justification of its use.

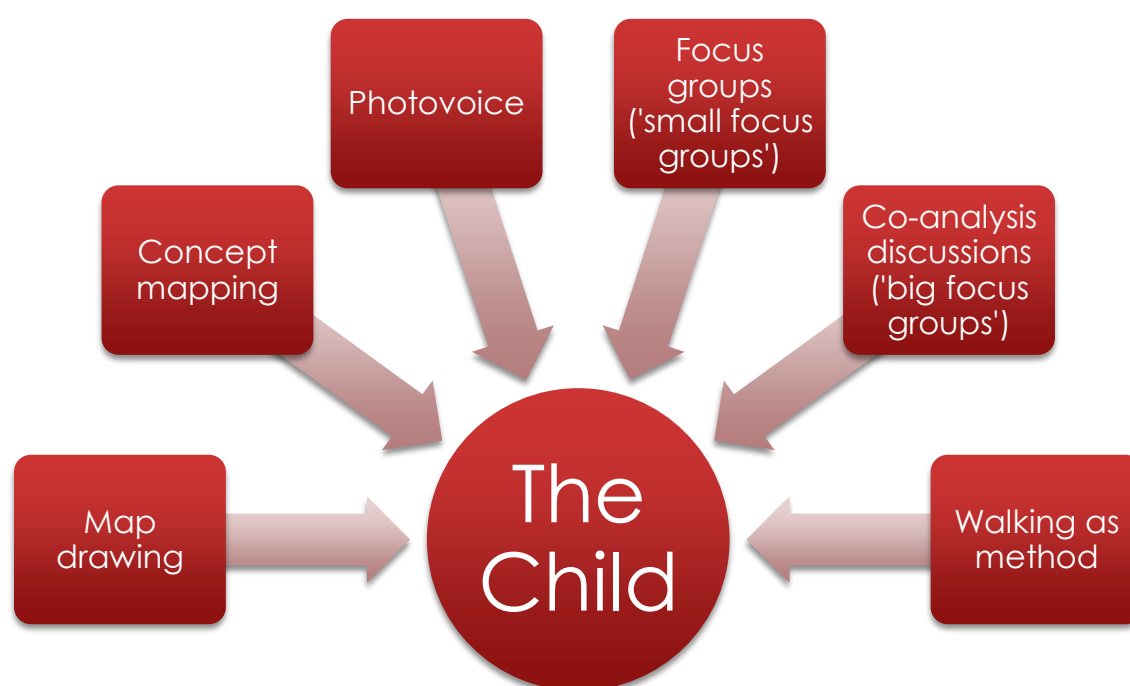
## 6.2.2 A mosaic multimethod approach

The selection of methods aimed to allow me, as an adult researcher, to see through the eyes of the children in the case (Philo, 2003) – and try to comprehend the ‘other world’ of children (Cloke & Little, 1997 p 13). The approach adopted tries to make the research process participatory, and valuable for the children, as well as enjoyable. It is best conceptualized as an ‘adapted mosaic approach’ (after Roe, 2006 p 167). For Clark and Moss (2001), the mosaic approach has six key elements which are outlined in Table 18.

Element	Explanation / rationale	Applicability to research
<b>Multimethods</b>	recognizing different voices or languages of children.	Multimethods have been used with the aim of eliciting different aspects / elements of children's place construction and experience.
<b>Participation</b>	children as experts in their own lives	Participatory methods are used, and a participatory process of data analysis is employed.
<b>Reflexive</b>	includes children in reflecting on meaning – addresses interpretation	Participatory process of data analysis, interpretation and verification embedded into process of juxtapositioning of data.
<b>Adaptable</b>	can be applied in many contexts	Appropriate for use with 13-14 year olds.
<b>Focus on children's lived experiences</b>	explores lives lived rather than knowledge gained.	Aim of research is to explore children's lived lives rather than eliciting / assessing their local environmental knowledge.
<b>Embedded into practice</b>	can be embedded into learning and practice in schools	Activities incorporated into study of local area – conducted as part of class activities in geography lessons where possible.

*Table 18: Mosaic approach (after Clark & Moss, 2001)*

At the core of the research process are the children themselves as shown in Figure 19.



*Figure 19: Diagrammatic representation of methods with child at the centre*

As Roe (2006 p.168) notes, ‘recognizing the discourse of children and encouraging communication through a variety of symbol systems provides adults with the potential for greater levels of analysis and understanding of what children actually mean’. The use of multiple methods, combined with co-analysis, aims to uncover a picture as full as possible of participants’ experiences of their local environment, and minimise the misinterpretation Roe refers to. Table 19 summarises methods used and their links to my research questions (Table 20). Methods of data collection are explored in detail later in the chapter.

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Brief summary</i>
<b>Freehand drawings of local area</b>	Participants individually drew freehand drawings of local area. Local area was not defined for children allowing free interpretation of ‘local’.
<b>Concept mapping with title ‘My Local Area’</b>	As with maps, concept maps were created individually. Participants were encouraged to make connections between concepts. Students were familiar with concept mapping as a tool for learning in class.
<b>Photovoice – independent</b>	Participants were asked to take photographs of their local area and significant places. These were discussed in focus groups. Some participants chose to include written captions with images, although this was not requested. Photos were printed for analysis with digital copies also kept.
<b>Walking as method</b>	Used in P2 only. Participants guided me on a walk around the area. This was entirely directed by participants – I merely joined the walk making notes and taking photographs. Participants also provided with cameras to document walk.
<b>Focus groups</b>	Conducted at various points in the research with volunteers. Split into ‘small’ and ‘big’ focus groups.
<b>Interviews with school administrators</b>	Conducted with school leaders towards end of research period.

*Table 19: summary of data collection methods*

<i>Research questions</i>	<i>Data generation methods</i>
<b>RQ1: How do children living within a gated expatriate community in Qatar and attending a British international school experience their local environment?</b>	Mapping, concept mapping, photovoice, walking as method, focus groups.
<b>RQ2: How can contrasting aspects of children's environmental experience be elicited through different methods?</b>	All methods: mappings, concept mapping, photovoice, walking as method, observation, focus groups, administrator interviews.

*Table 20: Links between research questions and data collection methods*

### 6.2.3 The value of visual methods:

The use of visual methods in social science, especially in research with young people, has grown immensely in recent years. A number of research projects examining children's place experience and perceptions of their environment have also employed visual methods successfully to elicit and uncover multiplicity of understandings and experiences (Cele, 2005; Barratt Hacking *et al*, 2008; Raitila, 2012). The premise of their use in this research is that not all knowledge, in particular expressions of experience and perception, are easily reduced to language. Visual images created by participants are able to communicate about place in a more multi-faceted way, and in ways that are hard to express in words (Cele, 2005; Eisner, 2008; Gantlett, 2007). Prosser and Loxley (2008) argue that images can allow access to different levels of consciousness, thereby allowing the communication of a more holistic understanding of experience. While visual methods may be critiqued for their inherent ambiguity (why was an image chosen? What does it represent? In what ways is it meaningful to the participant?) but these multiple perspective are actually a strength, allowing, through co-analysis and verification, the eliciting of children's own responses and interpretations. Bagnoli and Clark (2010) explore some of the key advantages of using visual methods with young people. Firstly, visual methods are engaging for young people – they are not traditionally associated with 'work' for many children, and therefore are often approached with a more open mind. The creativity inherent in visual methods can help in keeping participants interested in the research. Bagnoli & Clark (2010) found reluctance for young people to maintain interest in studies which involved mostly interviews and talking. As previously noted, they also offer a means of communication for children who have difficulty expressing themselves verbally or in writing – including very young children. Even with the most basic of scaffolding instructions, children are often able to create intricate and rich data (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). Finally, the creative process of engaging with visual methods encourages children to think – indeed, to engage with such methods inherently requires reflection and thought, something perhaps less necessary in standardized surveys or questionnaires. Despite this, there are some key challenges. While the openness of visual methods is useful in eliciting meaningful responses from participants, it can be overwhelming for those used to more scaffolding and structure. The openness also creates problems in the context of case study research insofar as comparison with other cases can be problematic.

### 6.2.4 Timeline of data collection and analysis:

Table 21 is a timeline of data collection and analysis which spanned two school years from Jan 2011 – May 2012. In July 2012 I left Qatar, relocating to China, but maintained links to the school.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Method / activity</i>
<i>P1 2011</i>	
<b>11<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Mapping activity (80 minutes)
<b>18<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Concept mapping (80 minutes)
<b>On-going</b>	Photovoice
<b>03<sup>rd</sup> February</b>	First big focus group analysis session (100 minutes)
<b>10<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Second big focus group analysis session (100 minutes)
<b>15<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Small focus group with 6 students (76 minutes)
<b>On-going</b>	Process of verification and informal conversations with children (during class time)
<i>P2 2011/12</i>	
<b>06<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Mapping with class 1 (80 minutes)
<b>07<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Mapping with class 2
<b>13<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Concept mapping with class 1
<b>14<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Concept mapping with class 2
<b>On-going</b>	Photovoice
<b>17<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Walk with class 1 (120 minutes)
<b>18<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Walk with class 2 (120 minutes)
<b>February 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Big focus group: extended data analysis session 1 – both groups (initially working separately, subsequently brought together). 80 mins.
<b>February 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	Big focus group: extended data analysis session 2 – both groups (initially working separately, subsequently brought together). 80 mins.
<b>March 07<sup>th</sup></b>	Small focus group 1 (class 1)
<b>March 08<sup>th</sup></b>	Small focus group 2 (class 2)
<b>April 30<sup>th</sup></b>	Small follow-up focus group with P1 participants + small focus group with P2 participants
<b>May 01<sup>st</sup></b>	Interviews with administrative staff at NQIS – 3 face-to-face interviews
<b>On-going</b>	Process of verification and informal conversations with children (during class time)

*Table 21: Timeline of data collection and analysis*

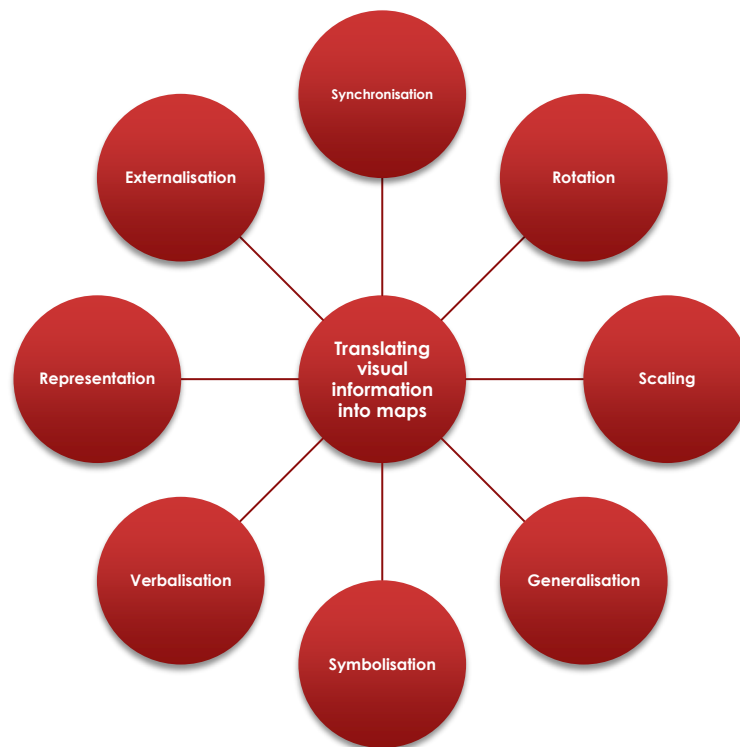
### 6.2.5 Mapping

Mapping is used as the starting point for this research, and the first method used with the children to explore their experienced perspectives / perceptions of the local environment. Matthews (1992, 98-99) states that maps, as ‘externalised products are no more than re-representations, two levels removed from actual spatial experience and so need to be regarded with some caution. For example, in the first instance, the real world is experienced by the child, cognitive maps are the outcome of these

transactions, and only through subsequent representation is the image provided'. Despite this, research in spatial behavior and perceptions by researchers such as Lynch (1960), Blaut & Stea (1971) and Saarinen (1973) have used sketch mapping / mental map drawing as an unstructured visual way of understanding children's sense of larger scale environments. More recently, Travlou *et al* (2008) and Christensen *et al* (2014) used mapping to explore teenagers place experiences and affordances. Similarly, Sander (2016) used 'mental mapping' in her ethnographic research with teenagers in Shanghai. She writes that 'mental mapping allows the research partner to establish a focus from his or her own perspective and thus—despite being limited by a guiding question—leaves more room for subjective experiences than interviewing alone... Consequently, the drawings of students' "personal Shanghais" are subjective interpretations based on their active reflections and ways of giving spaces meaning' (p.97). Since this research is dealing with children aged 13–14 who have been exposed to maps and aerial photography for several years, it is not necessary to explore in detail how very young children are able to interpret maps and aerial photographs.

Maps have the potential to reveal all aspects of the environment – physical, human and cultural / emotional. It is the unstructured nature of this method that is both a major advantage and disadvantage. In my own experience as a teacher using mental mapping in class activities some students focus too much on their mapping ability, rather than expressing their spatial understanding of a place. They become too focused on the neatness/ realism. Similarly, it is difficult to represent three-dimensional environments in two dimensions (Gillespie, 2010). Drawing measures both spatial understanding of an environment, but is also a creative process and physical process – it is to a certain extent limited by ability to draw. Similarly, drawing of mental maps relies on mental recall (Mark *et al* 1999). Research by Matthews (1995) and Bruner & Sherwood (1981) suggests that the socializing role of parents, family and culture on how children view and sketch their environment is significant. For example, social boundaries imposed by parents and the physical boundaries of the GC may limit the extent of the area sketched. Equally, warnings about the danger of a place (road, wood, park) might make this appear more prominently on a sketch map (Matthews, 1995).

According to Beck & Wood (1976) there are eight key elements in the process of translating spatial information held into tangible maps / drawings as shown in Figure 20.



*Figure 20: key elements in the process of translating spatial information held into tangible maps or drawings*

When these eight elements are considered, the complicated nature of producing a map from memory becomes clear, in particular for children. A key complication is that maps, drawn by children of the same age and same residential context, will show a great deal of variation based on manual graphical ability – i.e. the ability to draw. This complicates the process of coding and analysis, although this can be minimised through co-analysis. Children’s maps may even detour so much from traditional adult understandings of what a map is that the distinctions between drawings and maps become blurred. According to White & Sigel (1976), by altering the task given to children, their competency – in terms of ability to express their awareness and understanding of large-scale environments – can be moved upwards and downwards. A child may have an excellent understanding of an environment, but simply be unable to express it. A similar issue is that not all aspects of the environment are necessarily mappable. Through triangulation of methods, and post-mapping focus groups / interviews using maps as stimuli this can be minimized. A final and significant issue is the importance of instructions given to children when undertaking free hand mapping exercises. The degree of elicitation and detailed instructions will impact the type of maps produced. Similarly, factors like paper size / shape can influence maps drawn. However, if we conceptualize maps as models of



the world with symbolism and abstractions, they are still a useful tool, in combination with others, for exploring children's understandings and experiences of place which can be quantitatively and qualitatively analysed.

Table 22 (from Matthews 1992, p.87) classifies methods of stimulus presentation.

Types of techniques	Types of environmental information	
	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Sequence</b>
<i>Recall (unstructured)</i>	<b>Graphic continuous:</b> free-recall sketching, e.g. home area maps. <b>Verbal continuous:</b> e.g. spoken descriptions of the home area.	<b>Graphic continuous:</b> free-recall sketching, e.g. journey-to-school maps. <b>Verbal continuous:</b> e.g. spoken descriptions of a route.
<i>Recognition (structured)</i>	<b>Iconic continuous:</b> e.g. recognition of features on aerial photograph or on video film. <b>Graphic continuous:</b> e.g. recognition of features on a large scale map / plan. <b>Verbal discontinuous:</b> e.g. names or descriptions of places written on cards are selected.	<b>Iconic discontinuous:</b> e.g. recognition of a series of slides or photographs taken at intervals along a route. <b>Graphic continuous:</b> e.g. recognition of a route on a map. <b>Graphic discontinuous:</b> e.g. identification of streets or features directed on a map. <b>Verbal discontinuous:</b> e.g. routes are described by sequencing names of places/ streets etc, written on cards.

*Table 22: Map drawing as method: types and classification*

When applied to map drawing, the classification above is useful. Free-recall (unstructured) sketch mapping was used in this study.

Mapping was the first method to be used in both phases. This decision was taken to explore mental maps of the local area before engaging further with the environment through photography and walks to elicit more authentic responses. Participants were asked to draw a map of their local area, including all places they felt were significant to them in their everyday lives. They were told that it was acceptable to add annotations, but the task was essentially kept as open as possible. One of my key interests was whether the physical boundedness of the area (i.e. gated, walls, boundaries – physical and emotional), as a GC, would be noted on maps. Maps were drawn on A3 paper, and colour was allowed to be used.



*Figure 21: Map drawing in P1*

### 6.2.6 Concept mapping

Concept mapping provides an opportunity to collect text-based data in a traditional sense, albeit keeping the openness of visual methodologies, and incorporating an element of the visual insofar as the connections and layout of concept maps can be revealing, as well as the text content. The rationale behind using concept mapping is that it allows a researcher to capture understandings (of place) and relationships within and between these understandings / perspectives – emphasised by the links made (White and Gunstone, 1993). Indeed, when considering place / local area, physical places and imaginations of the environment do not exist in isolation – they are entwined and connected, something that can be represented in concept maps through the interconnections. Despite their value, concept mapping is a relatively uncommon research method, especially research exploring environment experiences, but is used extensively as a learning tool in classrooms (Walshe, 2008). However, Sander (2016) did use mind mapping, essentially the same as concept mapping, to explore expatriate German teenagers' concepts of home, belonging and identity. In schools, concept mapping has been promoted in learning by writers like Leat (1997) who encourages the use of thinking skills activities, and these are used extensively in geography and science classes. O'Brien (2002) successfully used concept mapping to explore Year 9 and 10's understandings of ecosystems and National Parks. O'Brien notes with reference to ideas or concepts, that they do not exist in isolation and thus concept mapping allow connections between disparate ideas to be made and encourages thinking about place.

I have used concept mapping in my own research on three occasions with both children and adults, and in all cases found the method to provide rich and meaningful data, encouraging deep thinking about concepts, both abstract and more tangible. In my study of children's constructions of distant place (Picton, 2008) I employed concept mapping to reveal understandings of a distant locality (in that case, Brazil). The value of concept maps lay in their ability to reveal the relational aspect of understanding distant place, in how understandings were often contrasted with binary opposites in their home country of the UK. In another study (Picton, 2010b) examining children's understandings of concepts in geography, specifically globalization, concept maps were used as a means of assessing understanding before and after a unit of enquiry. When examining sprawling or abstract concepts, concept maps are a very useful tool to assess changes and shifts in understanding. Thus, their value in longitudinal research was highlighted. Finally, in a similar piece of research (Picton, 2012) concept maps were used to explore teacher understandings of geographical concepts (again, globalization). In all cases the benefit of concept mapping was the holistic and open nature of the method, allowing multiplicity of responses from participants. Concept maps offered an opportunity for participants to offer breadth of knowledge, understandings and experiences, and when triangulated with other methods, focus groups and co-analysis, depth of understanding was also exposed.

In this research, some students used concept maps as an opportunity to list physical places, or to make complaints about their local area. While breadth was emphasised over depth, when combined with the process of co-analysis, focus groups and photographs, the value of the concept maps in eliciting place experience is significant, and some of the most revealing and interesting data emerged in concept maps. While my focus was on the textual content of concept maps, other researchers have placed more emphasis on the *connections* forged in concept maps (Walshe, 2008). I have focused on the textual content on the concept maps, mostly because this was preferred by the participants in the co-analysis of data. The children in this research were familiar with concept mapping and similar methods as they are used in teaching at school as a way of helping students connect ideas and understandings of topics (after Leat, 1997). The concept maps were not structured, to allow students to present their *own* understandings of place with minimum guidance. In P1, after describing the aims of the research and sharing my research questions (in age appropriate language), the students decided that the best focus for the centre of the concept maps would simply be 'My Local Area'. For continuity and transferability of

ideas between P1 and P2 this was also used as the focus for P2. While concept mapping can be problematic insofar as some children can be overwhelmed by the freedom (Picton, 2008), my use of the method in previous studies has shown that it is effective in accessing holistic understandings of place, without prompting and leading informants in any way. Concept mapping is particularly useful in eliciting experiences of place which cannot be articulated in drawings or maps – for example imagined and emotional aspects of place experience – physical and non-physical.

### **6.2.7 Photovoice**

The use of photographs has grown in popularity in social research in recent years, particularly research with marginalized groups, often in developing world contexts (see Joanou, 2009, Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2010, Bhosekar, 2009, Chakraborty, 2009). It is an example of a place-interactive method, and therefore one well suited to eliciting children's constructions, experiences and perceptions of place and their local environment. Photographs have also been used to support social scientific research through photo-elicitation (in interviews usually), photo documentation (systematic taking of photographs by a researcher which are then analysed) and through photovoice, sometimes also referred to as autophotography.

The use of photographs as a social research tool has also started to be used with children, also sometimes perceived as marginalized / voiceless, as an empowering way for children to qualitatively understand, present and re-present their environments and social worlds. Indeed, as Rose (2007) notes, photographs are able to capture texture – that is the 'feel' of places and specific locations. This, she claims, is because they carry so much visual information, showing us the detail of a moment which would take many pages to describe in writing. They also show us things which are hard, or even impossible, to describe in writing. In geography photographs have been used extensively to try and capture the sense of place. Similarly, anthropology has a long history of documenting people and place in visual form – both photographs and through ethnographic film (Picton, 2011).

One of the key benefits of photovoice in the context of this research is that it is not language dependent, until the point of analysis. Those children who may be reluctant to speak, write or even draw, often find the autonomy and control given in taking photographs appealing. It is argued that the voice of researchers can be imperial / intrusive, 'for as soon as we begin an interview, draft a questionnaire, or engage

others in conversation, the very language we use creates frames within which to realize knowledge' (Walker 1993, p.72). Taking photographs is not technically difficult, and it allows children to select which images, places, locations and environments are significant to them, and represent these. Of course, photographs themselves are open to a variety of interpretations, and the use of photovoice needs to be followed up with focus groups and interview in order to co-interpret meaning. The photovoice method is also a direct method of empowerment, as the act of photographing requires 'putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power' (Sontag 1973, p.4).

In this research, children were given a digital camera to have for a maximum of 1 week if they did not have their own camera or phone with camera. The brief was to take a maximum of 20 photographs which they felt best represented their local environment and their typical interactions with place. Local environment was not spatially defined. Emphasis was placed on the images being places which were meaningful to them, and part of their everyday lives. Photographs were found to be an unobtrusive way to gain access to children's everyday experiences of place, but at the same time be enjoyable for the children. Key was that it allowed the children to express their experiences of place, in-situ whilst interacting with the place. This is methodologically significant for any study of children's perceptions / experiences of a phenomena, such as place. As Cele (2005) notes, a photograph gives a researcher a glimpse of how children interact with place – it shows the relationship between the image and the subject / place in the image. This in many ways allows a researcher to be an observer, in situations which would ethically and practically be problematic – hence the value of photography as a method in sensitive settings, for example Young & Barrett's (2001) exploration of street children's lives in Kampala.

A complication with photography noted by Cele (2005) is the disjuncture between photos being on the one hand objective, insofar as it reproduces, as far as possible in a still image, the physical reality of a place caught in a moment, but at the same time is deeply subjective – it is a product of the photographer's interaction with the environment, their perceptions of place, and decisions about what is meaningful. The subjectivity lies in the choice of matter – arguably, what is not included in a photograph is as important as what is included in some respects. Cele (2005, p.151) goes on to distinguish between the child's 'photography eye' and the child's photographs with reference to her own use of photography as a method to explore children's place experiences in England and Sweden:

‘The photographic eye refers to the visual perception that is the base of a photograph. It not only reveals a motif but also insight into the child's perception. The photographer's way of looking at the world is reflected through her choice of motif and perspective... The image then tells two different stories – that of the photographed object and that of the photographer. The image hold many questions, such as why the photographer chose to take the picture from that angle, at that precise time... there is almost a contradiction between the 'objective' and 'subjective' aspect of a photograph... the conflict is between meaning and showing’.

Cele also notes that photographs include both intended and unintended elements, complicating analysis. With other methods used such as mapping, all elements included are deliberate and conscious. As well as this conflict between objectivity and subjectivity, the issue of 'representation' (Burgin, 1982 p.4) is significant. In line with interpretivism within this research, the objectivity and subjectivity of photographs is not seen as being one of conflict. Instead, photographs represent both the objectivity of a physical space, at a specific moment in time. They also represent the subjectivities of children's experiences of place and environments. For Hart (1997) this is a discord between photographs as documentary and photographs as art. However, it is arguably best to view them as somewhere inbetween, in Soja's terms as representing elements of perceived, conceived and lived space.

When interpreting photographs, two key outcomes emerge with children. Firstly, the photo itself – the image as a snapshot of a place. Secondly, there is the narrative of the photograph the child engages with. For Rasmussen (2000), these narratives are important in the research process, when participants discuss and analyse their own images, as the world outside the frame begins to emerge putting the photograph(s) in a wider context.

In terms of how the children responded to the use of photographs some key observations were made. Similar to Cele's (2005) findings, photography was seen as something of a treat and something exciting. Students were generally happy to share their photographs with their peers, but some preferred to talk about them in private with me, illustrating the personal nature of photography. Finally, in their analysis of

the photographs the children showed a great deal of introspection, and ability to articulate their reasons for taking photographs, and the narratives of the images.

However, the use of photography has some key issues. Firstly, in terms of ethical research the issue of permission here is significant. Permission has three key aspects – firstly to take the photographs (permission was sought from parents first), permission to photograph people and permission to photograph places. Secondly, photographs cannot be taken to reveal a place in its entirety – a photograph cannot in itself represent a place. It can, however, help to build up an understanding of place, although photographs themselves are selective. However, it is this facet of photography – that the photographer has selected a certain thing / place / bounded area to photograph – that enhances the validity of the method in this context. Finally, as Rose (2007) notes, images still need to be contextualized to some degree by words to become a useful tool in research. This contextualization in this research is in the form of co-analysis with the children.

#### **6.2.8 Walking as method**

Walks with the participants in P2 arose out of a desire to experience the local area with the children, and thereby gain deeper insights into place experience. It produces new experiences of place, where sensory information challenges (or affirms) old perceptions of place. Most importantly, in the context of NQC, walking has the potential to challenge the heterotopia of the GC and the private / public disjuncture. It was not used as a method in P1. Walking as method fused observation, interviews and photovoice in a place-interactive and place-responsive way. It is similar in some respects to Ingold's (2007 p.101) 'wayfaring', as a way of experiencing place in an embodied way, is understood as neither placeless nor place-bound but place making'. In some research it is referred to as 'child-led walks' (for example Green, 2012). It allows the emergence of understandings that may not emerge through other methods, along with the discovery and creation of new spaces. Walking as method has been used in psychology (Bridger, 2010), combined with use of geographical information systems (GIS) (Evans and Jones, 2011) and by researchers working with very young children (Green, 2012).

According to Cele (2005), it is only by being physical present in an environment that children can truly recall their perceptions, connections and relationship with place.

This is not to say that our connection and attachment to place when separated from it is in some way less authentic, rather it is revisionist. Conversely when a person is physically located in an environment, their experiences, 'memories and thoughts will be continuous reactions to objects, people and place itself' (Cele, 2005 p.10). Applied to the theorization of space that I have adopted distinguishing between perceived, conceived and lived space, which mapping and concept mapping provided insights into the first two, as did photovoice, actual lived experiences were in many ways lacking in the data. Photovoice allowed a degree of insight into the combined worlds of perceived (physical) and conceived (symbolic) place, but I felt walking as method would allow further development of understandings of lived environmental experience.

As a result Cele (2005, 2006) used walking with children in their local environment as a method to explore and understand their relationship with and experiences of place. Cele decided not to document the walks in any way – either in audio or writing. However, photographs were taken. Children were asked to point out things they wanted photographed – a more controlled form of photovoice. Walking as method with children often goes beyond walking. As Hackett (2016 p.172) notes 'children run, jump, dance, dive and climb. Very young children roll, crawl, cruise and creep'. In Cele's study the walks included the children's home and school areas, and children were asked to identify things which they particularly liked / disliked. The children were given some rules with regard to safety, but were encouraged to act as independently as possible. Conversation was an integral aspect of the research – between the children, and between the children and researcher. The conversations had no pre-determined structure, and were thus different to more formal interviews. The observational element of walking as a research method is central, as the researcher can see how children interact and use the environment. Cele (2005, 2006) observed how children used the physical environment for their own amusement, and how they negotiated parks, gardens and fear / excitement of certain places (busy roads, beggars). A key feature of the environment for the children was urban greenery / trees, which were often climbed and noted for their aesthetics.

In the context of this research walking with the children is used as an opportunity to observe the students engage with their local environment in an informal setting. As in Cele's (2006) and Moles' (2008) research, walking allows the researcher to engage with conversation with students and to observe their interaction with place (and each other). By using walking I am not suggesting that their engagement with place is



authentic (insofar as it being 'realistic' of their normal day-to-day engagement with place), but it does offer a chance for the children and myself to experience their local environment in a more naturalistic setting than a classroom, whilst also bringing the possibility of allowing the children to recall experiences, memories and attachments to place. Walks were combined with photography, whereby a number of digital cameras were distributed allowing the participants to record images of significant places. These were later discussed and analysed together. Questions of ethical considerations of intruding on children's space, particularly acute in my role as adult / teacher / researcher, were reduced by allowing the children to decide which places to show me.

Walking as method was used in P2 only, after P1 participants complained about the difficulties of fully recalling their experiences of the local environment in the context of school and the classroom. The walks were conducted in whole class groups with no pre-planned route. In contrast in Cele's (2006) study, pre-planned routes were used. The students were told to simply explore the environment and in the process highlight to me some of the significant places for them. Through not providing a route, it was anticipated that the participants would guide me through places of significance to them, similar to Percy-Smiths (2002) research with children. Of all the methods used, it was walking that was perhaps most participatory, and the method where the most power was relinquished to the children, insofar as they dictated where we went and guided the conversations, which were noted rather than recorded to not inhibit dialogue. For Philips (2005) walking as method is a means of protesting against more established methods of knowledge creation. As Cele (2006) notes with reference to her research, it is through walking that the everyday and mundane take on a new meaning when observed with the children. Places and objects which were essentially invisible to me, took on whole new meanings when with the children. Since this knowledge and these experiences are taken for granted by most people, and arguably particularly children, walking as method offers an opportunity to, briefly, explore this taken-for-granted world. Indeed, at moments during the walk the participants found my interest in their conversations amusing – why would a teacher be interested in something as mundane as where we hang out, or our secret places? Walks therefore offer a solution to exploring the everydayness of place – the taken-for-granted knowledge that is unlikely to be revealed in other more textual / visual methods. Despite this, as Cele notes, conversation / dialogue is central to the success of walking as method. It is through these conversations that understandings of place can be revealed. For this reason, it was essential on the walks that the

atmosphere was relaxed and open, to allow the participants to guide me with confidence and ease. What was striking about walking was its ability to allow encounters with all aspects of space / place – the physical / perceived, the imagined / conceived as well as the lived and experienced. Walking is suggested as particularly valuable as a method with young children.

#### **6.2.9 ‘Big focus groups’: analysis categorising data**

Focus groups in this research bridge the gap between data collection and data analysis. Data analysis sessions became known informally as ‘big focus groups’ (see timeline of data collection and analysis in 7.2.4) as they involved whole classes of students. Though not strictly focus groups, this was the term preferred by the children. During these sessions students analysed their data, mixing individual and collaborative analysis. This process is outlined in detail in Chapter 9, but is noted here as I conceive it as both method (since I was able to observe, listen to, note and record conversations) *and* analysis. Whilst I was guiding the process of analysis, I was also able to circulate and speak to individuals, clarifying ideas in their data. I had to find a balance between encouraging critical engagement and thinking about data, but at the same time not influencing too much.

#### **6.2.10 ‘Small focus groups’: evaluation of the process**

Focus groups were conducted with small groups of volunteer students (5 / 6 per group) after the whole group coding of data. The primary motivation of the focus groups was a reflection on the process of data collection for the participants, thus they are best described as evaluatory (of process of research) and validity checking focus groups. They were also an opportunity to discuss findings in a more controlled setting, and for both participants and myself to seek clarification of findings.

Focus groups are often seen as being more useful than interviews when conducting research with children (Hennessy & Heary, 2005). Focus groups are typically traced back to Bogardus (1926) who advocated them as a way of stimulating those present to speak and share ideas. Focus groups have successfully been used with children to gather information on a range of themes, including sensitive topics such as sexual experience and mental illness (Hennessy & Heary, 2005). Some of the advantages of focus groups over interview are that the group support provided allows greater openness in their responses. Also, a focus group does not have to be terminated if

an individual does not respond – it can still continue. There is reduced pressure on individuals to respond to every question / topic discussed (Basch, 1987). For children this safer peer environment tends to reflect situations they are used to in the classroom, and this can help to reduce the power imbalance that can exist between adult and children in one-to-one interviews. When children recount experiences and perceptions their memory can be jogged by other participants leading to a richer description of experience emerging. However, intimidation of some members of a focus group can occur, and some children may not have the confidence to speak up in front of their peers. Similarly, the expressed opinions of children in a group may be an attempt to fit in with the group, rather than their own true opinion / experiences (Hennessy & Heary, 2005). The dynamics of the group in terms of age, male / female mix and friendship groupings will also be influential in a focus group. In this research focus groups were used as an opportunity to explore and discuss in some detail other data generated – the maps, drawings and photographs. Students were given their set of data for reference.

However, focus groups do pose ethical issues which other methods do not. Two key aspects of focus groups need to be considered. Firstly, disclosures by participants are shared with the entire group. Secondly, intense group discussion can give rise to stress / distress for individual children (Hennessy & Heary, 2005). The comments of other children can be offensive to other children, particularly if the topic of discussion is particularly sensitive. Smith (1995) makes some recommendations to reduce these possible effects of focus groups, suggesting that researchers monitor participants for any signs of stress and intervene if necessary, and to debrief participants after the focus group at an appropriate time. However, in my experience in the school under study of discussing issues such as the local environment and issues of identity, children are not only willing but excited to share their experiences, feelings and ideas.

In both Phases focus groups, which were recorded and transcribed, were an important means of further verification of findings, co-analysis and examination of the key issues raised in the research. While the discussions were recorded and transcribed, I did also make notes, and these proved to be an extremely useful resource. Pronunciation and non-standard use of English was not altered, unless it really inhibited meaning, to maintain the authenticity of children's voices. Although I had a brief interview schedule, the focus groups were largely unstructured allowing participants to direct the process more and talk about what is meaningful to them.

The focus groups examined the children's maps, concept maps and drawings with the aim to draw links / connections between them, co-interpret data and elicit more detailed understandings. In addition, a focus group was held with P1 participants approximately 1 year after their initial data collection to discuss some of my 'insider' analysis and revisit data.

#### **6.2.11 Interviews with administrative staff**

Three interviews were conducted with administration at NQIS – the Head of Year 9, Deputy Head (with pastoral responsibility) and Head of School. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss the key outcomes of the research, and to gain insights into how school leaders conceptualise the role and nature of school-local environment interactions. Interviews were conducted in each staff member's respective office, and followed a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 4). This interview schedule was created to maintain some commonality between interviews, and was broadly adhered to. These interviews provided some context to findings from a school administrative perspective.

### **6.3 *Evaluation of methods***

Overall, it is felt that the data generated is sufficient for me to address my research questions. Due to leaving Qatar in June 2012, some loose ends in terms of dissemination of results personally to the community have unfortunately remained. In my conclusions I will address ideas about what aspects of place experience each specific method contributes to developing understandings of. Here, some more specific evaluation of the use of visual methods will be explored.

Two issues that emerged with the use of visual methods – notably map drawing in this research – are that firstly visual methods can sometimes become more of a measure of artistic ability than an expression of place experience (Picton, 2008). Secondly, drawing is never mimetic – a map (or any other drawing / representation) will never show full understanding of place. It is by its nature selective and representation. However, this is not conceived as a problem in the context of this research, rather an opportunity and area of interest. With reference to maps, I had to make it clear to participants that my intention was not to assess the 'accurateness' in

spatial terms of their drawings, but instead was interested in their choice of what to include / exclude, as an expression of their experiences of place.

I faced some challenges with the use of photovoice, in particular encouraging participants to capture images of places meaningful to them. A large number of images were clearly taken from the back seat of vehicles – the children had asked their parents to drive them around, and they simply took pictures of things that were important to them, or, as I speculate that they thought I might want them to take photos of. Also, many children took images inside their homes, something I had requested them not to do to avoid intrusion. In hindsight, both these limitations are in fact not limitations but interesting, highlighting firstly the significance of cars for the children, and the importance of home as a site in the local area.

In terms of recorded verbal data, it was not possible to transcribe all recorded conversations and discussions during ‘big focus group’ analysis sessions simply due to noise levels on recordings making discerning voices and who was talking impossible. Each table was provided with a digital recorder placed in the centre. Anticipating this, during sessions I ensured that when I spoke with children, whilst circulating, that I carried my own portable voice recorder and recorded these conversations, many of which were some of the most illuminating since I was able to ask clarifying questions about the visual and written data collected.

During a follow-up focus group with P1 participants one year after data collection, I discussed the methods used with participants. Daniel was keen to discuss the possibilities of surveys being used: “things like photographs are good but a survey would be quicker”. Sari noted that sometimes in the context of a classroom it was difficult to remember their local environment – “drawing the map really made me think. We see maps of the community everywhere which helps”. I asked the group what I could do to help them remember place which led to a discussion of the possibilities of walking as a method, as a further in-situ method which was implemented with P2. The P1 participants, now in Year 10, reflected on the experience all noting that it was fun. When revisiting their data – maps, concept maps and photographs – they delighted in looking at their work from the previous year, joking about and sharing their data freely. They noted a general sense of having ‘grown up’ since the collection of original data, and how this had changed their experiences in the local area, further support of viewing place experience as process rather than static.

## **6.4 *Summary and conclusions***

Chapter 7 has outlined the methods employed in this study. The methods chosen provide a mixture of visual, verbal and written data to try and elicit the richness of place experiences the children have. The methods are broadly understood as participatory, especially photovoice and walking as method. However, in the research I am acutely aware that no one method can fully uncover the richness of a person's interactions and experiences of place, some of which is both unknowable and inexpressible. This is acknowledged and accepted in this study, but not seen to devalue the methods used, and the richness of data collected. This richness is in large part attributed to co-analysis. Chapter 8 goes on to explain the processes of analysing this qualitative data through a participatory approach with the children in the study.

# Chapter 8: Data Analysis – the process

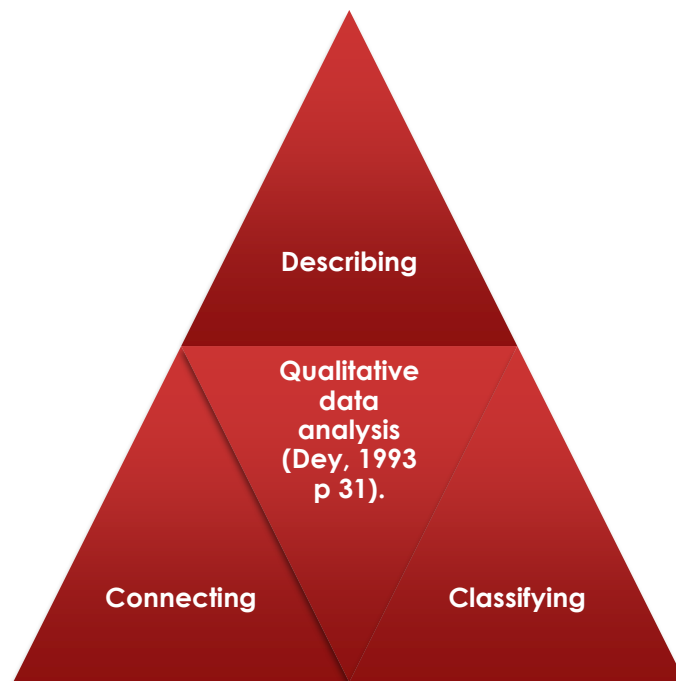
## ***7.1 Qualitative data analysis: a background discussion***

With reference to data analysis Crang (2003, p.129) writes that 'our material has already begun to be shaped prior to analysis'. It is true that choices regarding selection and reduction of data to fit a purpose are made throughout the research process. Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest that qualitative data analysis consists of three procedures, namely data reduction (through coding, summaries, discarding of data), data display and conclusion drawing / verification. The process of coding is important for Miles & Huberman (1994) – where raw data is organized into conceptual categories. As Miles and Huberman (1994, p.56) note:

'Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs'.

These codes should be valid, mutually exclusive and exhaustive. The stages that are suggested in the process are not entirely relevant to this study insofar as they emphasize the role of the researcher rather than participants in the process of data coding. However, it is useful to note the process suggested, as it broadly describes the process the children *themselves* went through with their data. Data is read / viewed, statements connected to the research question(s) are identified and assigned a code / category. Codes are noted, and statements are organized under these in a process of open coding. Using the codes in stage 1 above, the data is re-read and statements put into categories. Further codes may be developed, as axial codes. As the process progresses the researcher should become more analytical, looking for both patterns and explanation in the codes, for example causal relationships. Miles and Huberman also recommend the creation of categories in which a number of codes can be embedded. The participant developed codes are framed as categories of place experience because of their breadth and ability to contain multiple meanings.

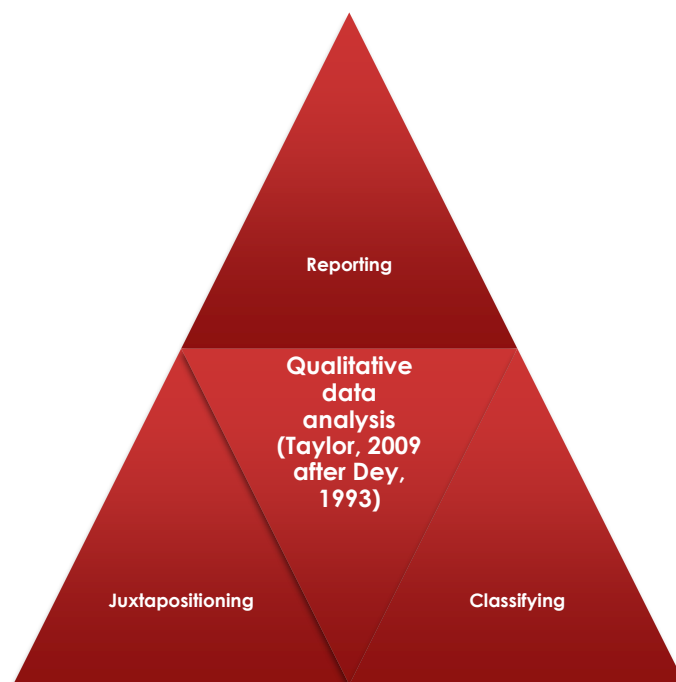
Dey's (1993 p 31) stages of analysis also provide a useful three-stage process of data analysis in qualitative research (Figure 22).



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*Figure 22: Stages of analysis (after Dey, 1993)*

This is adapted by Taylor (2009) as:



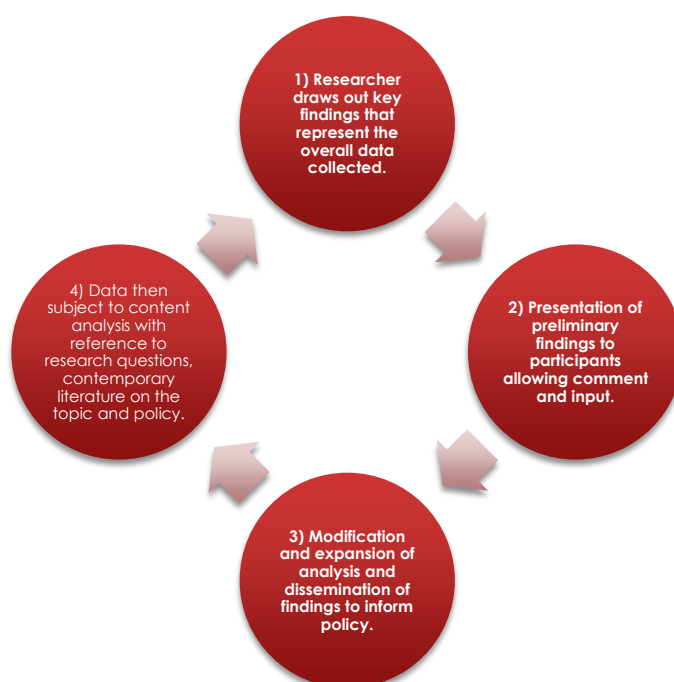
*Figure 23: Stages of analysis (after Taylor, 2009b)*



Taylor (2009) uses the term *reporting* rather than *describing* to emphasise context and audience. Juxtapositioning also arguably better describes the process of data analysis – a process which is creative, with the possibility of conflicting ideas emerging. These juxtapositions in analysis include data to data, literature to literature and literature to data. However, a core aspect of this research is the belief that participants need to take a more leading role in data analysis, both to ensure findings are meaningful and valid, and to balance power differentials in the research process.

## ***7.2 Participatory analysis with children and young people***

Data in this research is co-analysed with the participants – a process described in Figure 24. This participatory process differed somewhat from a more typical verification process outlined below:



*Figure 24: A typical process of verification in data analysis*

It was felt that with this research, that it was important to involve the children in the analysis of data on a more significant level and at an early stage, to ensure meaningful analysis took place, to reduce research subjectivities and to integrate verification more deeply into the case study. However, involving children in data

analysis and verification is far from unproblematic, as explored in the following section.

One of the key reasons participation in data analysis was desirable in this project was the personal and subjective nature of the data itself – in terms of form (mostly visual) and content (personal, referring to individual constructions and experiences of place). I felt to code and interpret the data without significant participant involvement would have led to a heavily researcher-laden analysis of the information. In this sense, participation in analysis significantly enhances the validity of the data, providing more authentic insights into ‘children’s ways of seeing and relating to their world’ (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998 p.337). Jones (2004 p.126), on reflection of research exploring the issue of child labour, writes that through participation in the process of data analysis ‘children can reflect on what the findings mean to *them* and their perceptions are important in planning corrective measures’. For Kellett (2005), the main barrier to the involvement in co-analysis of data has been low expectations of their capabilities in the process. Admittedly, this was a serious concern of mine, along with the risk of ‘missing’ important codes / themes, but one which was unfounded, particularly in the widening of research in P2 where the children developed particularly complex and thoughtful categories. Participatory research and co-analysis is particularly common with children in adverse situations and troubled contexts, for whom for a number of personal and practical reasons co-analysis of data is complicated further. For example, Fortin *et al* (2014) used participatory analysis of photovoice images to examine young mothers’ experiences of homelessness, allowing researchers to ‘meaningfully engage participants in qualitative analysis, providing greater likelihood that the participants’ viewpoints are accurately presented and can be meaningfully used to improve the practice of the professionals who have the mandate to support them’ (p.19). Similarly, Song Ha & Whittaker (2016) used a process of participatory analysis with ASD children to analyse photovoice images. There is a palpable shift in qualitative research towards more participant involvement in analysis beyond verification.

Kellett *et al* (2004 p.332) write that ‘a barrier to empowering children as researchers is not their lack of adult status but their lack of research skills. So why not teach them?’. As a research project working with older children, the teaching of basic research skills, and the identification of themes / categories, was relatively uncomplicated. With younger children this would likely have been significantly more challenging. Kellett goes on to propose supporting children in the process of

categorising, coding and interpreting data into manageable forms using models of Vygotskian scaffolding. However, to relinquish control to the extent that children take on the task of data analysis with complete independence was not feasible in this study. Instead, they were guided through a process of creating categories of place experience from their own data (outlined in 8.4) with a degree of support and guidance. However, the themes emerged from the participants themselves. In some cases I helped rephrase some of the more complex themes in subtle ways, but crucially the meaning was not changed. A key concern was that only certain voices would be heard, with less confident children contributing less to discussions. By having a scaffolded process which started with individual analysis, followed by small group, and finally whole class analysis, this issue was felt to be minimized, though not eliminated. By working in small groups less confident students still felt comfortable contributing.

With reference to 'training' children in data analysis not all proponents of co-analysis with children agree that training is necessary or desirable. Holland *et al* (2008) claim that training children in analysis would detract from their ability to maintain independence in exploring and examining their own lives. Holland *et al* (2008) also highlight ethical concerns with co-analysis, particularly in groups. For them, the ethical drawbacks of such a process included the risk of some voices being lost in the process and lack of anonymity.

While this research is not dealing with particularly private data and information, it was felt that the co-analysis was best based primarily on analysis of own data rather than others. Despite this, at a number of stages in the analysis, students did work in small and large groups to decide on cross-data group substantive categories. However, in this process the children were free to share as much or little of their own data as they felt appropriate. In general this was not an issue – all appeared happy and willing to share their data and themes – and it was not noted as a concern in focus groups. With reference to participatory methods themselves, Gallacher & Gallager write:

'We are concerned that participatory methods are in danger of being seen as a 'fool-proof' technology that – when applied carefully and conscientiously – will enable research involving children to achieve ethical and epistemological validity. Yet, participatory methods are no less problematic, or ethically ambiguous, than any other research method.... we have no particular issue with researchers asking

children to draw, dance or build – we are simply concerned that such methods are not used naively’. (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008 p.515).

Thomas & O’Kane (1998) are altogether more positive about the process of analysis with children. Their emphasis was on making the process fun, but with concrete structures in place to help analysis, concluding that despite difficulties ‘there is no doubt that the course followed by the research, and the final conclusions, were very different as a result of the children’s own interpretations of the data’ (p.345). The best word to describe the process I went through with my participants would be compromise – especially compromising levels of independence, when to relinquish control of the process, and when to reign in conversations. In this sense, ‘big focus groups’ were much like ‘normal’ lessons as a teacher.

### **7.3 The process of analysis**

As noted by Berghold and Thomas (2012), the involvement of participants and ‘lay people’ in data analysis is not new, with Glaser & Strauss stressing its importance as far back as 1967. This is often done with research partners in focus groups (for example Bord *et al*, 2012). The key premise of participatory analysis within this research is that participatory research methods necessitate participatory analysis. Three sets of data were chosen to be analysed in a participatory process. These were the maps, concept maps and photovoice images. The need for participatory analysis is justified because of the following:

- 1) The process of data collection was open and free resulting in plural and subjective responses – difficult for a researcher to interpret without imposing own subjectivities. The more open and visual a method is, the higher the risk of researcher interpretations being applied.
- 2) Visual, child-created data, in particular necessitates a greater degree of participant voice in analysis, hence the applicability of co-analysis. Visual data is inherently more open than textual data. Photographs are richest as a data source when combined with conversations about the images. Fundamentally, the focus on children’s experiences and their lived worlds in this research necessitates their voices be heard in the analysis process.

With reference to point one above, I am suggesting that the value of participatory analysis lies along a continuum depending on the degree of participation / openness of the method itself. Thus, the more open a method is, the greater the degree of participant freedom in data generation and the more creative and visual the method is, the more likely a participant approach to analysis is necessary and valuable building in verification. In my previous research exploring children's constructions of distant place and concepts in geography (Picton, 2008 / 2011) I adopted a more researcher-led approach to data analysis, quantitatively coding frequency of words and categories. While this revealed interesting patterns, in hindsight I feel that some richness of the data may have been lost in this process.

The process of analysis with the participants is outlined in Figure 25 as a flow chart. This process took place over two extended classroom sessions due to the volume of data and complexities of managing the sessions. Handheld cassette recorders were placed on each table to record the conversations taking place. These were later transcribed when possible (background noise levels meant some was not able to be transcribed), but not checked with participants as it was felt this would be overwhelming for them. The process of coding and analysis is adapted from both grounded theory and participatory research. It is loosely based on the approach of Barratt & Barratt Hacking (2009) who researched children's local environment experiences in England. Over the course of two days they held data analysis sessions with the participants of their research. They introduced a clear framework of analysis for the children as follows:

- Participants read, looked at maps and listened to audio tapes / videos in a process of familiarization with the data. Freedom as to whether this be done individually or in groups was given.
- Participants re-looked at the data beginning to consider what is important about what the children are saying.
- Notes on what seems important was added to a post it note.
- Discussions with partners and add notes together.
- Make one set of notes for the whole group using lap tops.
- Organise notes into different groups of ideas.

(after Barratt & Barratt Hacking 2009 p. 378)

I adapted this as follows in Figure 25.



Figure 25: Process of analysis: flow chart in 5 steps

Using their similar process of analysis, Barratt and Barratt Hacking (2009) found that despite initial support being needed, the children (one or two years younger than those in this research) worked largely independently of adults involved in the research, thereby avoiding adult interpretations of their data. They argued that this not only creates 'better' data, but also more meaningful insights.

My process of analysis (Figures 25 and 27) deviates from the method used by Barratt & Barratt Hacking (2009; 2012) in two key ways. Firstly, while each data set was individually analysed in this research, the end goal of the two analysis sessions was to develop cross-data categories to allow a more holistic exploration data and encourage participant crystallization. The term crystallization is being used rather than triangulation to break away from the notion of a fixed point or superior explanation which is implicit in triangulation. If place experience is conceptualized as dynamic, embodied and changing, as in this study, and the existence of multiple experiences of place, crystallization offers a more nuanced view (Richardson, 1991) which emphasizes complimentary rather than competing perspectives.

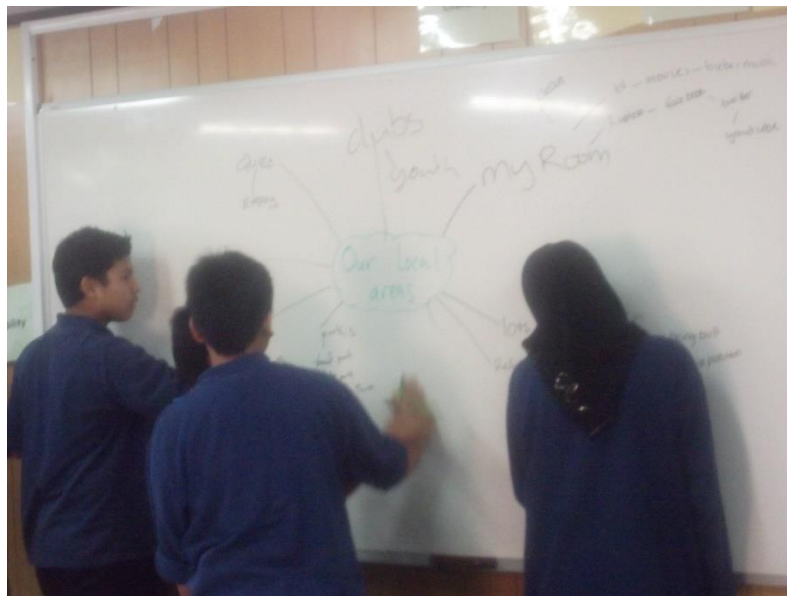
Contradictions and exceptions offer scope for refining theory, rather than posing a threat to theorizing. Secondly, the analysis of the data by the children in this research is seen as the first stage of a three-stage analysis of data rather than end point, where data from both phases is reported holistically, then analysed by myself in a process of juxtapositioning of categories, data and theory. The analysis of data in P2 was supplemented by the walks conducted with the children. During these walks the children and myself took photographs, and I made notes on the experience shortly after the walks, and noted key dialogues verbatim where possible.

One key change to the process in P2 was the introduction of more structured guidance for the analysis of photographs by the children. This was in response to difficulties some children had in P1 interpreting their images. The 'frame' for analysis scaffolded the process through a series of questions printed and placed on each table.

- Where was the image taken?
- What is significant about this place?
- What motivated you to take this photograph?
- What is outside the frame?

- What does this image tell people about your local environment?
- How do you use this place / area?
- How would you best describe the place in the image?

Participants were asked to write a 'title' for their photograph on the back of each image – these are used in Figure headings in this thesis where photos are used.



*Figure 26: volunteer participants creating a group concept map before 'big focus group' to practice data analysis*

The process of analysis was collaborative, and the students enjoyed discussing the complexities of creating codes and categories. The research skills gained by the students were valuable for future projects.

Focus groups held with small group of students from each Phase to discuss data and categories with reference to their data and explore in more detail themes emerging from all data sources (concept maps, photos, maps), as well as evaluating the process of the research.



Analysis of the photographs was most challenging for the children. As a result, I spent time with each group guiding this process, and recording (audio) this process to allow reflection on the conversations.



*Figure 27: processes of analysis and reporting*

## 7.4 A multistage analysis process

Because of the nature of my research and analysis process I have devised my own framework and conceptualization of data analysis involving ‘insider’ participant analysis, as well as ‘outsider’ researcher juxtapositioning of data and theory, resulting in the creation of sub-categories and analytical concepts to holistically frame place experience of the children in the case. It should be noted that the use of the terms ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ should not detract from my theorizing of the ‘case as space’, and thus the incorporation of myself, as teacher-researcher, as *part* of the case and its bundle of trajectories. Instead, I am an outsider in the sense that it is the children’s constructions of place that are in focus, not my own – I am not the subject of the research and in this sense am an ‘outsider’. Unfortunately, these terms set up, linguistically, opposition between myself and participants.

The origins of my analysis process can be traced broadly from my readings of grounded theory notably how Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (1995) identify a two-step

coding process in data analysis. Firstly, there is substantive coding which is open and rigorous. This is followed by a process of theoretical coding – this is where substantive codes are analysed in relational terms – how they may relate to each other and integrate – with a view to hypothesis / theory generation (Glaser, 1978 p.72). Strauss & Corbin (1990; 1998) distinguish between open, axial and selective coding. Open coding refers to the generation of initial concepts from data. Axial coding is the linking of these concepts into conceptual families – a coding paradigm. This process is explained in Figure 28 below where both the children ('insiders') and researcher ('outsider') are experts in their different contexts and ways:

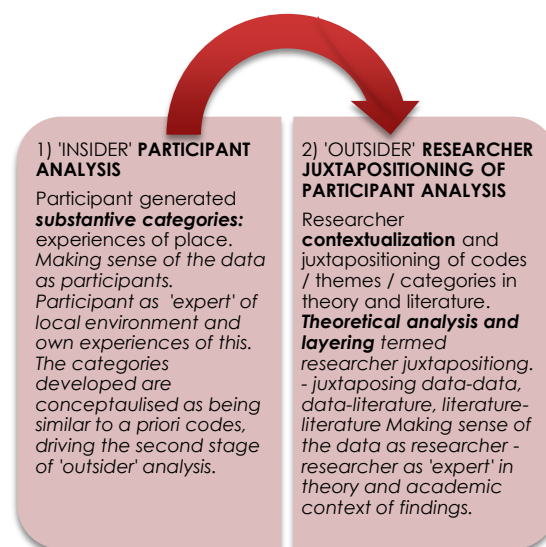
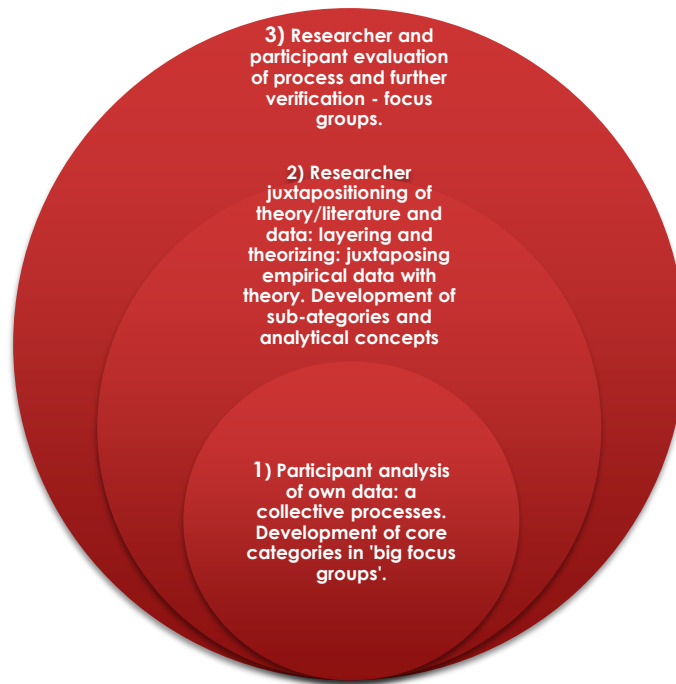


Figure 28: participants and researcher as 'experts' in different fields.



*Figure 29: Placing participant analysis and outsider juxtapositioning in a three-layered process*

Figures 28 and 29 emphasise the central place of participant analysis in the creation of the first substantive categories of analysis to inform theorizing, these categories used in a similar way to a priori codes. This strikes a balance between Glaser & Strauss' (1967) inductive approach, and Miles & Huberman's (1994) approach of having a 'provisional' list of codes before conducting research, rather like a priori codes. The participant generated codes/categories are not, strictly speaking, a priori since they are inductive and grounded in the data (just participant rather than researcher or NVIVO generated), but can be used as such to drive and guide my more analytical approach as researcher. I have developed this model of analysis in response to the challenge of layering and applying theory to child participant generated codes in data. The purpose of co-analysis has always been to ensure findings are meaningful and valid – member checked and verified. However, I felt it was also important to put these participant generated categories into an academic and theoretical context through a process of theorization and juxtapositioning of data and ideas, resulting in the creation of theoretical sub-categories and analytical concepts (as in Christensen, 2015). This is best conceptualized as a process of theory layering using the children's categories of place experience as the foundation for this, thereby ensuring theorizing does not deviate too far away from these. This researcher analysis provides an opportunity to connect these participant generated categories, which are more descriptive of place experience (like Miles & Huberman's descriptive codes), and connect them to a wider body of theory in an

academic context, to allow deeper analysis. This deviates from a more traditional process of respondent verification or member checks as the formal process of analysis begins with the participants. This also contrasts with similar research examining childhood environmental experience, for example Simkins & Thwaites (2008), whose coding process was researcher-driven, resulting in generic themes, which diverged into typologies of different categories / elements. For example, the generic theme of 'objects' branched into categories like access points, boundaries, building details, further developed into elements like gates, walls, windows and doors. A similar process is undertaken here, except that the generic themes are participant rather than researcher generated. This is not to say that through my engagement with the data collection process, I had not begun a process of iterative analysis, but I was conscious to avoid leading the participants in their process of analysis. I did however encourage the children to look at their data critically, and to try and develop categories / codes which were as all-encompassing as possible. One of my main concerns with participant generated codes / categories was ensuring these did not overlook or omit important data, understandings and experiences, also a concern of use of a priori codes more generally. Participants were asked at various stages in co-analysis, before finalising categories, to carefully review their data and consider whether all key themes and ideas could be located within one or more of the categories.

In general, researchers verify findings with participants to determine accuracy, after researcher analysis. In such cases, participants have a chance to input, and if they feel the findings are accurate, then credibility is confirmed (Cresswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, at the end of the research process it is often presented to participants to review – to check if it is an authentic representation of their input. In this research, where the first analysis of data was by participants and the layering of theory over this, verification was inbuilt earlier in the process, but still checked with participants in focus groups.

## **7.5 Reporting: choice of data and material for exemplification in thesis**

A key aspect of this process of 'outsider' analysis and juxtapositioning has been the choice of data used in exemplification of children's themes in the reporting of ideas in this thesis. While the possibilities of participant generated choice of material was considered to further increase the degree of participation, this was deemed too challenging primarily because of time constraints. I have chosen a selection of data to exemplify the key participant generated categories of place experience, framing these as 'stories of place'. Where possible data from a number of different children is used to validate ideas, in others just one or two. Table 23 highlights some of the key pitfalls to avoid in case study reporting (after Nisbet & Watt, 1984 p.91) I have been conscious of during analysis and theorising.

<b><i>Danger in case study reporting</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b>Journalistic tendencies</b>	Sensationalism and distortion to emphasise a particular narrative.
<b>Selective reporting</b>	Based on preconceived ideas, only selecting data that fits these.
<b>Anecdotalism</b>	Where trivial aspects of the case take over.
<b>Pomposity</b>	Devising grande theories from the case, rich with jargon.
<b>Blandness</b>	Emphasis on consensus (even where there is conflict in data), general uncritical reporting of data.

*Table 23: Dangers in reporting and theorizing in case studies*

With reference to my use of the term 'outsider', the process of 'outsider analysis' and juxtapositioning does not aim to dislodge or de-value the children's categories but rather explore the potential for an additional layer of analysis by myself as researcher. My analysis is an enriching of the categories provided by the participants through academic engagement with the themes and wider context of these. However, the key challenge of this process is not privileging my own analysis of themes and categories over the categories themselves through a process of reflexivity. Perhaps the best way of contextualizing this is a means of generating 'knowledge (rather than its extraction) through a merging of academic with local

knowledge to provide .. people with tools for analysing their life conditions' (Veale 2005, p.253). Knowledge generation rather than extraction emphasizes the role of the children, but also does not negate the opportunities afforded through the merging of academic knowledge with children's knowledges – a creative process akin to creating something together with the participants. This is also well-suited to my conceptualisation of myself as part of the case, and avoids a position whereby one is faced with an either / or choice of reporting participants' analyses or researcher's. Instead, there is a negotiated combination of both. For Veale (2005, p.254), '

'Participatory methods are those that facilitate the process of knowledge production, as opposed to knowledge 'gathering', as is the case with methods such as individual interviews, surveys or checklists... methods should shift the traditional balance from 'close to open, from individual to group, from verbal to visual, from measuring to comparing... The aim is to facilitate reflection, debate, argument, dissent and consensus, to stimulate the articulation of multiple voices and positions, and, through the process, to lay the foundations for empowerment'.

Along with Veale I have adopted a broader understanding of participatory methods, emphasizing the method itself (being open, self-directed), rather than the extent to which those methods were developed with participants. However, there is a shift in thinking advocating the development of methods *by* participants. This approach was rejected on pragmatic grounds, and a desire to maintain a degree of researcher-control in the process of research design planning. However, such approaches should certainly be considered for future explorations of children environmental / place experiences. Therefore, using Chambers (1997) typology of participatory methods, the methods of this research fit the description of participatory methods in two key main ways: through their openness and the emphasis on the visual methods.

## **7.6 *Non-participatory analysis***

Some data in the research, best viewed as the less participatory data, was not analysed with the participants. This data comprised informal data collected in the classroom (conversations of analysis process), data from focus groups (transcribed conversations) and my own notes and photographs taken during walks in P2. These

decisions were primarily pragmatic, and based on a realistic assessment of the children's capabilities and interest in the process of analysis. It was felt that asking the children to read through transcribed conversations and focus groups would be overwhelming. Focus groups were conducted in the days after group coding of data. The purpose of the focus groups was to give myself and the students an opportunity to clarify information and to discuss the emerging themes further blurring the boundaries between data collection and analysis. Focus groups were conducted with 6 students from each group, chosen on a voluntary basis (those willing to give up lunchtimes).

### ***7.7 Identified challenges of participant-driven analysis***

A contribution of this research to the field of participatory research, in particular research involving children in the process of data analysis, has been to show how participant and researcher analysis can be combined. Four key challenges have been identified in this process:

- 1) Capability of children to analyse data: this is not meant to demean the abilities of children to analyse data, but it is a complex skill. While they coped well, this was not universal. Children may be experts of their own lives and experiences, this does not mean they are always able to express this. The interpretation of photographs proved particularly challenging, which is why in P2 a series of guiding questions or 'frame' were developed to assist this process.
- 2) Through a process of group analysis it is difficult to avoid totalizing children's voices within the research – experiences of place are not homogenous but rather show significant heterogeneities (Cook-Sather, 2007). Use of data from a range of children in Chapter 9 hopes to retain some sense of the uniqueness of place experience within the categories devised by groups.
- 3) Ensuring all children's voices are heard in the process – in any group of young people, confidence levels vary and some voices can be lost. In part this can be reduced through a scaffolded process of analysis – individual – small group – whole group – but researchers must be aware of this as an issue. Similarly, I frequently reminded the children they were welcome to keep data private from both myself and their peers.
- 4) The 'uncertainty' of categories – a significant issue explored further in 9.3.

## **7.8 *Summary and conclusions***

Handling large quantities qualitative and visual data is a complex task. The approach in this study retains children's voices, interpretations and experiences which was my main aim. While I am pleased the children were able to contribute to the analysis in the creation of 'big' categories, I am aware that the participatory-driven process of analysis could have been taken much further – to development of subcategories and selection of data exemplification in the thesis.

Another challenge in terms of reporting in Chapter 9 that follows, is how to manage reporting of the two phases holistically, without losing uniqueness and individuality in the stories of place experience that emerged. This issue will now be addressed in chapter 9.



## Chapter 9: Data analysis – the outcomes as categories of place experience

Chapter 9 explores how children attending NQIS experience their local environment through examining their categories of place experience. In each case, the categories are supported with a variety of data. Therefore, while the categories are participant generated, the choice of evidence to support these is not. Ideally the participants would have played a greater role in piecing together best examples to illustrate key categories, this was not feasible in terms of time available, my departure from Qatar and with the number of participants involved. In many cases I have used data from just one or two participants with the aim of building up richer stories of place. This risks anecdotalism and the accommodation of data to opportunistically fit, but since the categories themselves are participant generated, this is in part negated. Divergent data is also presented where possible. The categories developed are viewed in a way Thrift (1999 p.304) describes concepts, as 'indefinite'. They do not necessarily 'represent' perfectly place experience, but instead 'resonate' these experiences.

Barratt Hacking *et al* (2007) found in their study of children's environmental experience in the UK that the children aged 11 – 12 had an intricate and detailed knowledge of their local area. They also felt attached to it considering the quality of the environment to be extremely important. However, they expressed concern about the difficulty in taking action to achieve their goals for the local area – they did not feel they had the power or knowledge to effect change, despite wanting to. The lack of opportunities in school and within the curriculum to consider the local environment, and fundamentally ways of improving it, was neglected in their eyes. Linked to this was a feeling that schools should support them in their desire to learn about and shape their local area. Broadly speaking similar findings emerged here, despite the huge socio-cultural differences between the semi-rural location under study in Barratt Hacking *et al*'s study and the context of NQIS and NQC. Before exploring specific findings, more generalized observations are summarized below:

- The children took great pleasure in sharing their environmental experiences and experiences of place showing enthusiasm during data collection and analysis.

- The children openly said that they were pleased that somebody was interested in their lives, everyday experiences, thoughts about their local environment.
- The children enjoyed the process of co-analysis of data – it was clear through animated discussions and impromptu sharing of knowledge (e.g. spontaneous use of concept mapping on the whiteboard to connect ideas) that this was a novel, but enjoyable experience for them, where their ideas and voice were respected.
- The children believed it is important to study the local area in school, and to consider how it shapes them as people, but also how they shape the environment. This is a clear articulation of what geographical learning, at its core, is.
- Through sharing their place experiences and perceptions with peers they felt a sense of satisfaction that other people had the same thoughts, experiences and feelings.
- Despite being critical of their place and local environment, for example as being boring or overly sanitized and safe, it is generally perceived as a positive place.
- There is a strong sense of the children being proud of their place, not specifically NQIS or NQC, but of Qatar more widely. Sporting events and urban development in Doha gave them a sense of being part of something successful and powerful.
- The children want to create more child/teenager-friendly environments and have a voice in this process, but do not know how to go about this – they feel somewhat powerless to shape and affect change.

## ***8.1 Key findings as categories of place experience***

Themes from both phases are being reported holistically to provide a fuller and more complete analysis of childhood place experience in the context of NQC. Where terminology used to describe similar aspects of place experience in the different phases differs this is noted (see Table 24), although similar themes emerged, and similar language was adopted by the children in both phases.

The challenges of dealing with large amounts of qualitative data, and different data sets, was considerable. The diverse nature of the data and the importance of

inductive co-analysis with participants further complicated the search for themes. Despite this, a holistic approach to the process was adopted, primarily because reporting by data set (maps vs. concept maps vs. photographs vs. walks) or by phase was felt to detract from the realities of place and environmental experience which is itself all-encompassing, holistic and, most importantly, dynamic and changing. Further support for cross-data theme development was that the categories generated by the participants showed a great deal of overlap between the different types of data – themes such as 'homes', for example, clearly emerged in all data. Even non-physical spaces such as cyberspace featured in maps, concept maps and photographs. The themes, which explore a variety of experiences of place, are understood as categories of place experience. Whilst these are presented individually, this is not meant to set up deliberate binaries of place experience, and the categories are best understood as deeply integrated and interconnected.

Table 24 summarizes the key participant generated categories from the research, sub-categories and analytical concepts. As noted by Nilsen (2005, p.117) 'A major concern in qualitative research is how researchers convert everyday experiences into theoretical knowledge through researchers' interpretations and 'translations' of data into theoretical concepts'. In the process of analysis and creation of analytical concepts Nilsen proposes two possible approaches – one which is 'top down', or the importing of established theoretical concepts (somewhat like the use of *a priori* codes) – generalising to theory. Another is the creation of new theoretical concepts grounded in empirical data, as in grounded theory. The latter approach is somewhat more 'fuzzy' and complicated (Nilsen, 2005 p.118). The terms 'emic' and 'etic' are also appropriate here. Lett (2000 p.130) summarises, from an anthropological perspective, the emic approach as 'descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied'. Conversely, 'etic constructs accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers' – that is to say, from the perspective of existing theory. Nilsen (p.131) cautions: 'Just as in other subject areas, researchers do things with words. Concepts have normative and powerful connotations, which urge us to be reflexive about which analytical concepts we apply to represent the lives of the subjects of our research.' As a research project where the initial analytical categories are participant generated I would contend that the analysis process is in this respect bottom-up, or emic. However, my creation of analytical concepts is more

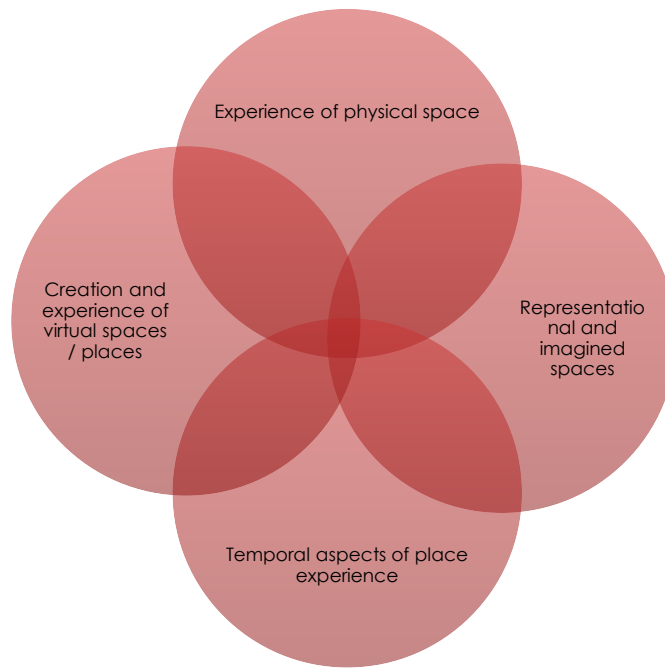
traditional and top-down, cross-referencing themes and concepts with existing research and theory. Like much qualitative research, analysis therefore lies in the tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches. In the reporting of these categories a conflict lies in my desire to create etic analytical categories of place experience which are generalised and somewhat universal, whilst also not trivialising the uniqueness of place experience in place of generalised experiences. This is countered in using data for individual children in the analysis of these categories. Analysis in this chapter is driven by participant categories rather than analytical concepts, as these are considered the foundational concepts of place experience, being participant generated, although the advantages of using 'bigger' and more theoretical analytical concepts is explored in 9.3.

Participant generated categories of place (both phases) (emic, bottom-up categories)	Category used in analysis and thesis (where there is a difference between P1 and 2 terminology)	Sub-categories and summary explanation (researcher derived, verified in focus groups)	Relevant analytical concepts: <sup>3</sup>
<b>People and cultural places (P1)</b>	n/a	Territorialisation of space / ethnic stereotyping in community – 'Indian areas', 'Indonesian areas', 'Ras Gas area', 'Qatar Gas area' – spatial dimensions of company allegiances	PS; RI
<b>Economic places (P1), shops (P2)</b>	Economic Places	The local co-op shop as a significant 'hang-out'.	PS
<b>Gates and walls (P2)</b>	n/a	Physical boundaries, gatedness, feelings of imprisonment, physical limit to independent mobility and environmental exploration, gates and walls as affording sense of safety, non-physical boundaries and 'unknown places', walls as fun sites of play and transgression.	PS; RI
<b>Religion (P1) / Religious places / ethics (P2)</b>	Religious Places	Religious sites / metaphysical places – mosques, <i>jinn</i> (spirits), haunted places	PS; RI
<b>Social places (P1), recreation (P2), Boring places (P2)</b>	Social Places	Streets, youth club, sports facilities, gendered spaces.	PS; RI. Some significance of VS
<b>Transport (P1) Roads and travel (P2)</b>	Roads and travel	Physical morphology of roads and transportation, 'nodal' senses of place	PS
<b>Health (P1 &amp; P2)</b>	Health	Health centre, healthy places	PS
<b>Home / homes (P1 &amp; P2)</b>	Home and homes	Bedrooms, belongings, home as home country elsewhere, gendering of place.	PS; RI
<b>School (P1), Education (P2)</b>	School and education	School as a physical site / building, school as place of friendship / socialization, a valued place, a disliked place.	PS
<b>Time (P2)</b>	n/a	The process of place with reference to seasons, time of day. Also concerned with time perception (in terms of experiencing time as passing quickly or slowly) and rapid change in Qatar context (the changing physical and socio-cultural landscapes).	T; RI
<b>Online world (P2)</b>	n/a	Lives lived online – the significance of online communication with people local and distant, as part of the maintenance of identity.	VS; RI
<b>Safe places (P2); Security (P1 &amp; P2)</b>	Security	Bullying, the 'male gaze', presence of security guards. In some senses linked to the physicality of gates and walls.	PS; RI
<b>Environment (P1); the outdoors (Ph2)</b>	Environment and outdoors	Wastelands, secret places, natural / unnatural binary / debate, green spaces.	PS; RI

*Table 24: summary of participant generated analytical categories of place experience*

Initial analysis of the categories developed by the children led to the development of four broad analytical concepts of place experience: experiences of physical space, representational and imagined space (here, 'representational space overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects' (Lefebvre 1991 p39)), experiences of virtual spaces and temporal aspects of place experience (Figure 30). Together these are proposed as a means of exploring children's place experiences and constructions of place in the context of this case study.

<sup>3</sup> experiences of physical space (PS), representational and imagined space (RI), experiences of virtual spaces (VS) and temporal aspects of place experience (T).



*Figure 30: Diagrammatic representation of analytical concepts to understand place experience.*

The creation of broad 'analytical concepts' (Nilsen, 2005) from the children's categories is loosely based on research by Christensen *et al* (2015), who, using direct content analysis, followed by content analysis guided by Massey's (1994) conceptualization of space and place (place as process, place as unbounded, and place as negotiated), created ten categories and three analytical concepts based on their research of children's place experiences in Denmark. A Venn diagram (Figure 30) has been presented to emphasize that these categories are far from mutually exclusive. To take an example, the participant generated theme of 'safe places' can be nestled within physical space, insofar as certain physical localities were deemed safe or unsafe. However, aspects of the category 'safe places' also referred to more socio-cultural and imagined aspects of place experience, thus nestling it between the two analytical concepts. Similarly, the broad category of religious places encompasses both physical structures such as mosques, but also imaginary aspects of place experiences such as the presence of ghosts and spirits. Therefore, the four analytical concepts are not strictly bounded, and most categories developed by the children are located in the in-between conceptual spaces between the different categories. For this reason, analysis of each participant generated category is not grouped by analytical concept.

## **8.2 Stories of place - collective categories; personal narratives**

This section will discuss the thirteen categories of place experience developed by the children across the two phases. In each category the data from a selection of children is used to exemplify key ideas, with the intention of telling a more personalized *story* of place. It is of course important to note that the experiences of the local environment outlined by the children are not universal, linear or homogenised. Different categories of place experience will hold different meanings and significance for individual children, something that in 9.3 will be shown to challenge the categories themselves creating uncertainty. Some concepts are particularly contested, for example concepts of safety and nature are highly heterogeneous in their conceptualisation by different children.

However, for the purposes of this study some generalising, through the generation of categories, is useful to frame place experience in a holistic way, and generalising *for* the case. The decision of using the data from a small selection of participants for each category has been made to develop a more in-depth analysis of the place experiences of individual children, and because different aspects of place experience are more or less significant for individual children. This helps bridge the gap between the *generalised* (the participant generated categories) and the *specific* (individual children's unique experiences, constructions, perceptions, affordances). Through the exemplifying data various stories of place begin to emerge, personalizing the children's experiences and narratives of their local environment. Findings from this study are compared and contrasted with similar studies in different contexts where possible. Firstly, the complex category of 'People and Cultural Places' will be explored.

### **8.2.1 People and Cultural places**

This category is one of the most complex and deceptively refers primarily to micro-territorialisation of space along ethnic and company lines, and to an extent the gendering of spaces in the community. Here I am conceptualising the physical, hard boundaries of AKS as macro-territory, and the soft, imagined territories within NQC as micro-territories. As a category it emerged as 'People and Cultural Places' in P1 analysis as an attempt to encompass participant ideas of segregation and the formation of territories within the community, or as Fitri simply put it, how there are "zones for different people like where Indians stay and go or just Indos

[Indonesians]”. Culture, or more specifically ‘cultural’ as a feature of places, is understood by most of the participants in a pejorative sense – an interesting understanding of the word. ‘Cultural’ is used to refer to places which are crowded, populated by lower-income groups, usually from South Asian backgrounds. The category is understood to be grounded in boundaries, territories, binary understandings of place, and processes of othering.

The category was discussed at length in our ‘big focus group’. As a category, ‘People and Cultural Places’ is best understood within the framework of geographical imaginations, as opposed to experiences, the term favoured in this study. These imaginations are mental images which impact experiences of place, built around two key aspects of identity in the context of NQC – nationality and family company- sponsorship. The category is also rooted in part, in the realities of various segregations in the community. However, at the heart of the category ‘People and Cultural Places’ are processes of ‘othering’ as understood by Said (1978), and also explored by Hengst (1997) with reference to children’s concepts of self and other, where children construct their own concept of nationality and identity through ideas of *difference* to others. This highlights the importance not only of exploring children’s concepts of ‘self’, but also of ‘other’. Hengst suggests that children can think in terms of social collectives, acknowledging and accepting similarities with certain types of nations.

#### **8.2.1.1 A divided community: ethnic stereotyping and racializing place**

The first aspect of the territorialisation of space and othering within NQC is ethnic stereotyping and the ethnic bounding of space and place. It is significant that within the physical boundaries of the GC, further non-physical social boundaries – soft walls - are created and imagined by many of the children, often in apparently oppositional terms of ‘us’ / ‘them’. Hadi’s concept map (Figure 31) highlights a wider community challenge in NQC of xenophobic attitudes and associated negative stereotyping, particularly of Indians who appear to be identified as ethno-cultural ‘others’. Where such themes emerged in data I directly challenged ideas (for example in focus groups, discussions and walks) in my capacity as educator, but in concept maps and map drawings, which were done individually without significant supervision, this was not always possible, and ideas remain in the data. Hadi refers to the ‘big Indian generation’ (a reference to large families) and ‘too much noise come from Indians’,



'chaos' and 'too much litters from the Indians'. When challenged about this statements Hadi claimed them to be factually true and therefore not xenophobic.

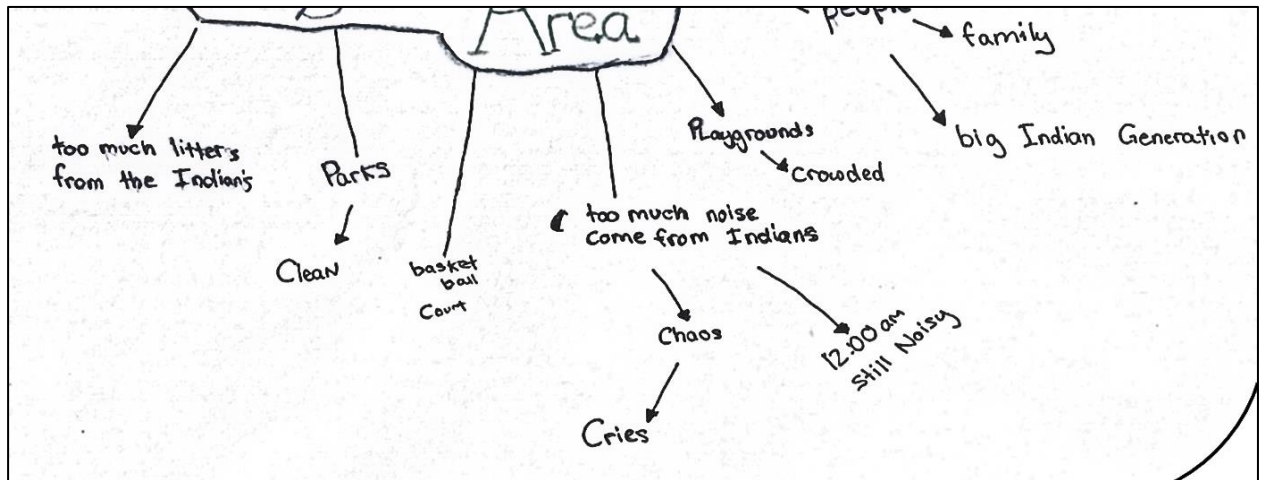


Figure 31: The 'othering' of the Indian community (Hadi's concept map)

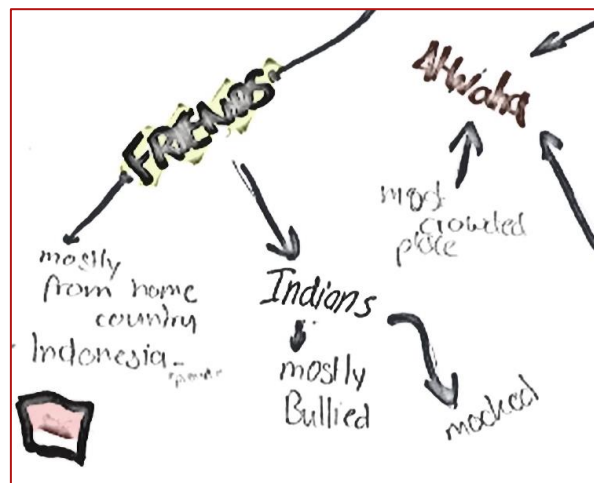


Figure 32: Indians as 'mostly bullied' and 'mocked' (Ikhsan)

Ikhsan's concept map refers to Indians as 'mostly bullied' and 'mocked' (Figure 32). A result of the ethnic stereotyping as exemplified by Hadi and Ikhsan's concept maps is the othering of an ethnic group, and to an extent the symbolic territorialisation of space, based on imaginative geographies. Territorialisation is understood in the way Sack (1986) explores the term as possession of area – the ability and power to say the area is 'ours not yours' (Sack, 1986 p.21).



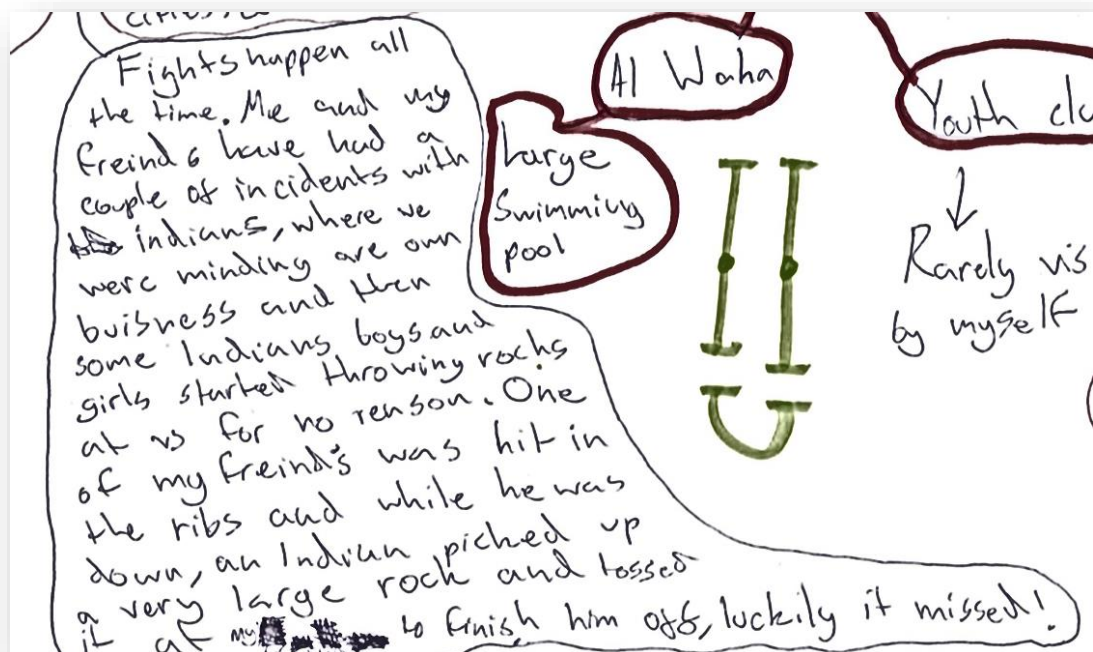


Figure 34: “me and my friends have had a couple of incidents with indians” (Ben’s concept map)

While I cannot verify or comment on these claims, regardless of what happened the writing does show is a sense of distrust and breakdown in relations between Indian and British Stream students. Ben’s language totalises Indians, and such experiences, whether grounded in reality or imaginations, and will likely impact everyday use of space and place. While international schools often emphasise community and internationalism, this is clearly challenged at NQIS and in NQC.

#### 8.2.1.2 Othering of domestic workers

The othering of domestic workers emerged in data, and is best situated within ‘People and Cultural Places’. Sheikha’s (Qatari, P1) concept map will be explored to highlight some of the key issues. Her data is also examined in ‘Safe Places and Security’ with reference to safety concerns, but it is important to include some excerpts here because of the clear othering of maids and drivers, more generally representing low-paid migrants in Qatar.

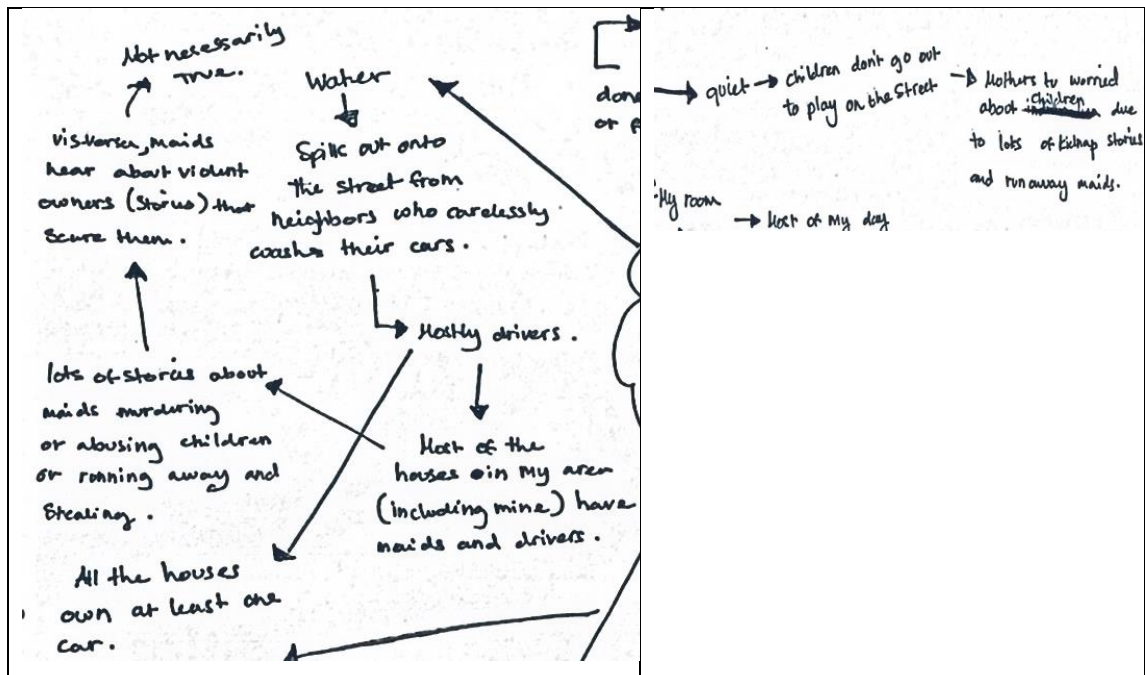


Figure 35: Fears about cultural and economic 'others' from a Qatari perspective

In these two plates (Figure 35) Sheikha explains some rather sensational fears of place, bound up in a process of othering maids and to an extent, drivers. She writes, 'most of the houses in my area (including mine) have maids and drivers'.. there are 'lots of stories about maids murdering or abusing children or running away and stealing'. She also acknowledges maids also fear abuse from employers ('violent owners'), but that these 'stories' are 'not necessarily true'. The use of the word 'owner' as opposed to employer is rather disrupting. Although an uncomfortable topic, abuse of domestic workers in the Gulf is a reality. These fears appear to have a real impact on childhood place experience, where streets are quiet because of mothers fearing kidnap by maids. Elaborating ideas in our small focus group, Sheikha highlighted how she felt it was a huge risk to allow a 'stranger' into homes to work. While I do not wish to generalise from this limited data, nor take it at face value, other large-scale studies have shown high levels abuse of domestic workers in the Gulf (Reda, 2015; Amnesty International, 2014).

### 8.2.1.3 Company allegiances and territories

Daniel's map (Figure 36) is useful to consider again this time in its entirety as it highlights the territorialisation of space both by nationality and company allegiance (i.e. the family's sponsoring company / employer – Ras Gas, Qatar Gas and Dolphin). This supports Thomson's (2005) assertion that many territories for children are based on adult structures, rather than self-created by children themselves. As





community (outside NQC) being 'very cultural' with '100s of people', supporting his ideas of overcrowding with lower-income groups. This sets up a clear distinction between those within the compound, and those outside. There is also some clear evidence of xenophobic attitudes, in particular reference to Indians being 'unhygienic'.

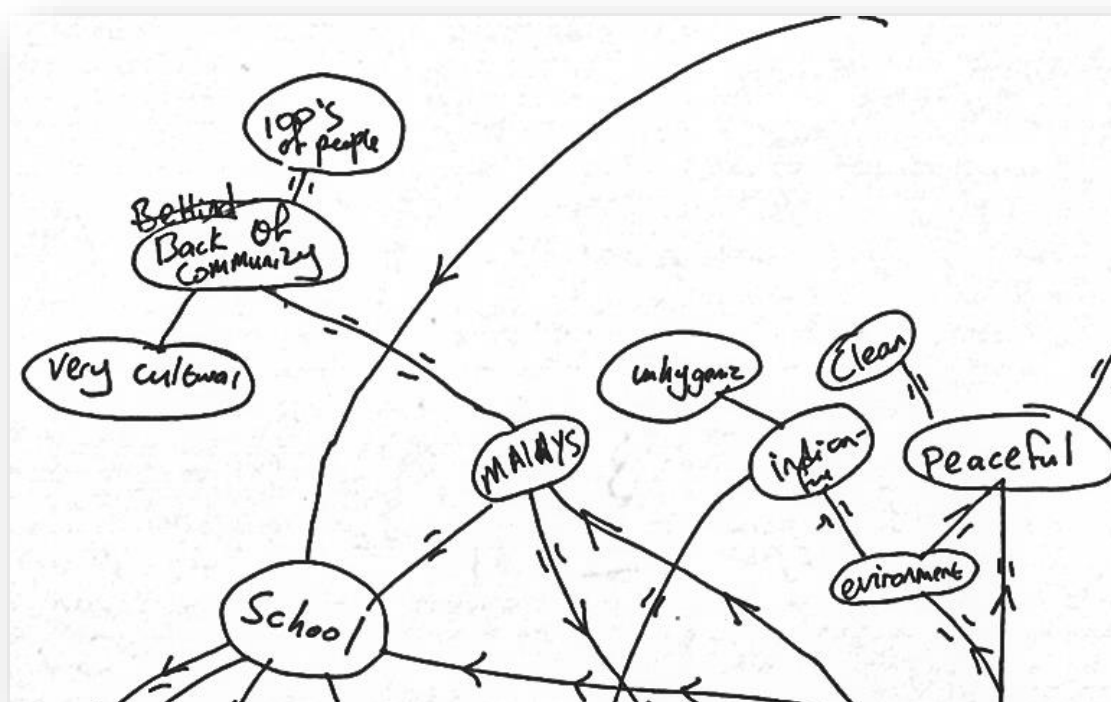


Figure 37: 'cultural' as pejorative and othering of Indian community

Saad also writes that 'some places are cultural' (Figure 38). Unsure about his meaning, during analysis I asked for clarification, and he said there are "places which are like slums with cultural people". This understanding of 'cultural' essentially as 'not wealthy' is an interesting linguistic quirk of many of the participants, and one that sets up a binary of cultural / not cultural, based along socio-economic lines. I asked Saad if NQC was 'cultural' and he emphatically said "no". To further check meaning I asked if the area behind the nearby petrol station, an area of slum-like housing and shacks where many South Asian male migrants lived in poor conditions, was 'cultural' and the answer was "yes, very cultural".

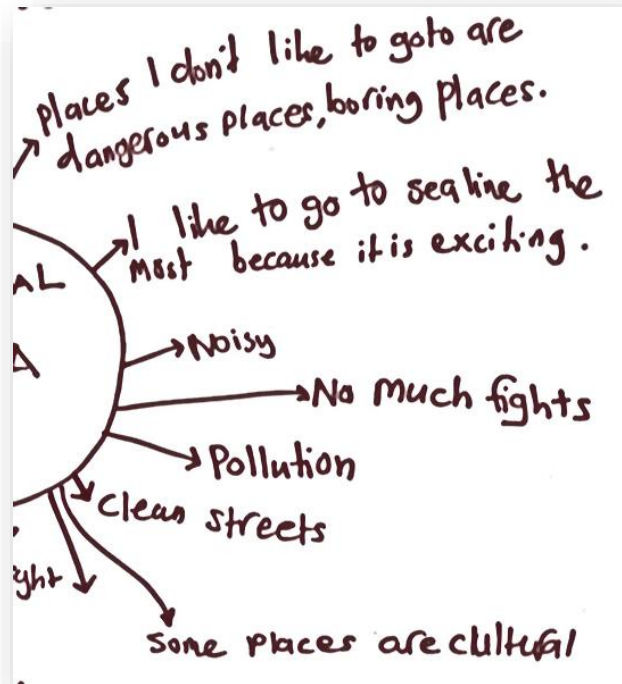


Figure 38: 'some places and cultural', Saad P1 concept map

It is speculated that this association between 'culture' and poor living conditions, in the context of Qatar, emerges out of the social structure of the country, whereby certain nationalities tend to dominate specific economic fields, for example most South Asian males work as low-paid labourers, leading to associations of wealth and poverty, with specific ethnic and cultural groups, which sets up the conditions for residential 'territories' based on wealth and ethnicity.

## 8.2.2 Social places and recreation

### *Place-making, exclusion and spaces for and of children*

The significance of the community's leisure facilities was clear throughout the research, especially for boys, for whom the swimming pools, youth club, skate park and football field were of great importance. In P1 these spaces were articulated as social places, in P2 as recreation. Both encompassed a range of physical locations, notably the youth club, sports facilities, but also friends' houses, the street, co-op and parks, the important implication being social places are nested and examined under a number of different categories (for example co-op in economic places). For a number of children social places perceived to be local extended to Doha, the capital

city. Four key themes and places are explored – adult surveillance of children's spaces, streets as social spaces, the skate park (and subversive use of it), the youth club and the importance of parks.

#### **8.2.2.1 “They don't trust us there”: the adult gaze**

The children raised a number of concerns about the use of recreational places, notably the high level of adult surveillance in the areas. Matteo noted “when we go to the clubs alone they don't trust us there”. Ali notes in a group conversation “we get moved on from the places we play like the skate park. Whenever they see a big group of us they [security staff] get scared especially with the Arab boys”. Complaints by adolescents of being moved on by security was also noted by Shearer and Walters (2015) in their study of how children use space in an Australian ‘master planned estate’ (similar to a GC, but with freer access rules). While not law enforcement, security in NQC act somewhat like police (see Copeland, 2004). Shearer and Walters (p.610) write ‘security guards, unlike the police, move people on for no other reason than they are on private property, and young people's presence is at the discretion of the owner of that private property’. The owner in the context of NQC being the gas companies, since property is not owned by occupants. Here ‘young people have become victims of changing notions of public space where young people's very presence is seen as problematic’ (Freeman and Riordan 2002, p.299). The spaces referred to as social / recreation places are interesting insofar as they are quasi-public spaces, some created specifically for teenagers such as the youth club and skate park, others more adultist in their positioning.





*Figure 39: 'Clubs are important places for relaxation' (Sari photovoice image)*

Adult concerns of how children use spaces like the social clubs was rife, as reflected in the community meeting minutes, excerpt below in Figure 40.

3	Children run wild in the clubs	Clubs/Security	-spoil adult time -suggested to have an 'Adult Day' a week	1	Parents are constantly advised.
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*Figure 40: Community meeting minutes (Nov 2012): 'children run wild in the clubs'.*

From this document, it is clear that the children's sense of not feeling welcome in the clubs is verified, although it is likely younger children are being targeted in these comments. At the time of research the social clubs appeared to be becoming more segregated and exclusionary spaces with specific times allocated for specific demographic groups – 'ladies days', 'family days and 'adult days', for example.

This process of moving children into adult sanctioned spaces 'for children' is a common theme in children's geographies research. Jones (2000 p.43-44) writes

'Children mostly live their lives within the warp and weft of the striations of adult space. These material, symbolic and disciplinary structures are both incidental and deliberate in their relation to children. Children's geographies operate within these patterns. The question is the nature of the interaction between the two. If adults' geographies are intensive, rigid and powerfully embedded there may be little chance for children to build their own geographies, but if adults' geographies are more permeable, heterogeneous and tolerant of otherness... [children] maybe have the chance to express this in their creation of their own geographies.'

In the context of this study, the former nature of interactions dominates, with rigid structures and understandings of the role and place of young people.

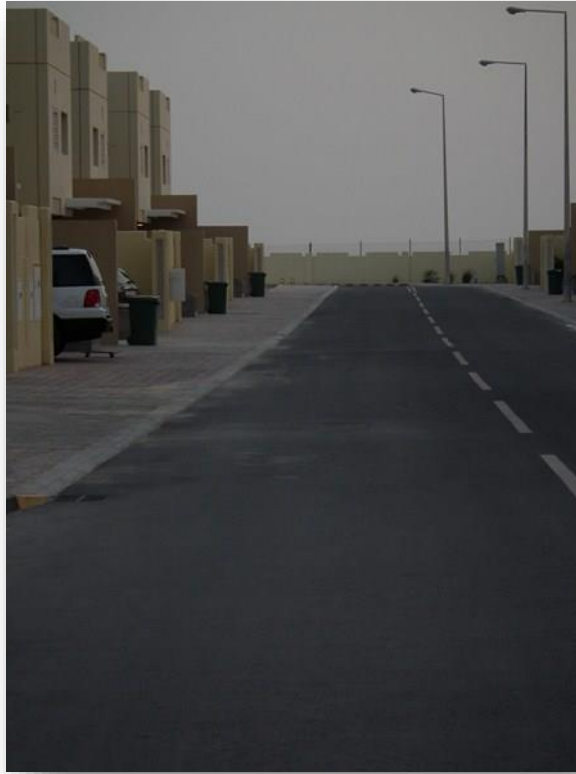
#### **8.2.2.2 The significance of the street: unsanctioned sites of socialization**

While the category 'Roads and Travel' refers to roads and transports in a functional sense, and in the sense of car mobilities, in 'Social places and recreation' the street is understood as a social space. In existing literature exploring children's and teenagers use of public space like streets tends to focus on their invisibility and marginalization (Vanderstede, 2011). Indeed, in some countries, and possibly NQC, there is a moral panic surrounding teenagers use of, and presence in, public spaces. Terms used to describe this include 'geographies of exclusion', the 'othering of teenagers' and 'landscapes of powerlessness' (Vanderstede, 2011 p.67). Teenagers' use of public space such as streets can be a means of escaping or subverting adult surveillance / hegemony (Matthews *et al*, 1998; Shearer & Walters, 2015). Cahill (2000) shows that teenagers sometimes avoid certain streets, avoid eye contact with adults and develop other strategies to use public space. In literature, streets and public spaces are sometimes referred to as 'fourthspaces' (i.e. public spaces beyond home, school and playgrounds) (Vanderstede, 2011 p.168). Similarly, the term 'Thirdspace' is sometimes used to describe quasi-public spaces, allowing a degree of appropriation, but never full control by teenagers. Referring to streets, squares and open parks, Matthews *et al* (2000 p.292) write that 'the street constitutes an important cultural setting, a lived space where they affirm their own identity and

celebrate their feelings of belonging. In essence, these places are 'won out' from the fabric of adult society, but are always in constant threat of being reclaimed'.

Streets in most contexts are perceived as public spaces, but in the context of gated communities this binary of public / private space is further blurred – the street is arguably 'public' space for some people (for example adult residents), more private (and therefore subject to different rules of use) for visitors, non-resident workers and maybe children. Matthews *et al* (2000 p.63) note that young peoples' use of space is contradicted by a sense of streets as being unsafe *for* children and teenagers, but also being unsafe *because* of children and teenagers. Writing about their study of young peoples' (aged 9–16) use of the street as a social space in edge of town council estates in the East Midlands, England they write that congregations of young people in streets is a challenge to 'the hegemony of adult ownership of public space'

Images of streets appeared in many photovoice images, but in many images streets were eerily devoid of people, in contrast to how many of the children reported using the street as a social space (see Figure 41). During our walk, girls mostly agreed the street was not an important or appropriate social site for them. A major topic of conversation in focus groups was intense knowledge of short cuts to get between significant places, highlighting in-depth spatial knowledge of the area and streets. Experience of streets was noted as very dependent on time (of day, of year – see 9.2.12), but also on company. This emotional geography of being in the street was highlighted by Nabeel – “with friends it's fun, alone it is scary and with parents it's boring”. Children also noted the sensory geography of the street, and avoidance of some areas because of factors like smell. The use of pungent fertilisers on plants in the community meant some children avoided time in the street and outside more generally because of smell. Similarly, the use of music to 'give atmosphere' to the street was noted. By listening to music in the street, place appears to be fundamentally changed for the children, again highlighting the importance of a sensory understanding of place and how this can be modified by being with friends and listening to music. This transformed the street from boring to interesting for some children. Gender segregation on streets was also noted, with other places like clubs and the skate park being deemed more acceptable for different sexes to mix.



*Figure 41: 'Dead end' Sari's street (photovoice image)*

Matthews *et al* speculate that some 'streets', which they use to describe outside public space more widely, are places 'won out' from adult control, and thus places to reaffirm senses of belonging and difference. They attempt to connect the 'real' (material aspects of place) with the 'imagined' (the symbolic geographies of space) to better understand how identities are constructed and performed in streets. Here they are adopting some of the terminology of Bhabha (1994) and Soja (1996), notably the concept of Thirdspace. Bhabha's central thesis is that identity is produced through (in)between spaces which provide 'the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation' (Bhabha, 1994 p.1). Matthews *et al* liken groups of children using streets as social places to groups (in)between – 'that is, set between the freedom and autonomy of adulthood and the constraints and dependency of infancy, neither adult nor child, 'angel nor devil', situated in imagined communities (located in thirdspace)' (Matthews *et al*, 2000 p.65). Fundamentally, Matthews *et al* propose that streets are places for young people to create their identities, and celebrate a sense of togetherness, temporarily apart from the adult world.

This is however challenged in the context of the more controlled environment of a GC where security patrols regularly move on teenagers from public spaces and streets, even those specifically designed for young people such as the skate park. Some children noted being 'moved on' when roaming the streets in groups, and girls noted feelings of insecurity when walking out in the street. Fears and dislikes of the street were also noted, ranging from fears of ghosts at night to the male gaze and smell of certain areas. The extreme heat in summer was also noted as a factor limiting time spent out on the street, and making night time the main time for exploring by foot outside of winter.

#### **8.2.2.3 The skate park – a sanctioned but surveillance-controlled teen space**

Skate parks are quintessential teen spaces, with tangible benefits for users and communities more widely (Freeman and Riordan, 2002). However, in many senses skate parks are a default 'solution' to the perceived 'problem' of teenagers in urban planning without much thought to their use and management (Whitzman and Mizrahi, 2012). Nolan (2003) explores skate boarding and skate parks in Newcastle, Australia. Nolan highlights how skate parks can become transgressive sites writing that 'The concept of transgression is of interest...because it highlights the way spaces are constructed and reproduced as normative landscapes, and how values and meanings are attached to these places' (2003 p111). Using Creswell's understanding of transgressive behaviour, as that which is 'out of place' going against cultural norms and values, Nolan highlights how skateboarding behaviour can simultaneously be 'in' and 'out of place' simultaneously depending on a number of factors.

The skate park in NQC is occasionally used by skate boarders, but was identified more broadly as a place to hang out, in part because it was considered a 'cool' place, and also because the landscape of the park afforded some privacy away from the gaze of adults (see Figure 42). Indeed, on our walk in P2 Emile noted "*nothing is used for what it's meant for*". Rather like the co-op, the skate park is a site for transgressing social boundaries and engaging in what is considered deviant behaviour – mixing between boys and girls, smoking and graffiti.



*Figure 42: 'A cool place' Aslan's photovoice image*

Some children spoke about the skate park as somewhere not particularly welcoming, and it appears not all children spent or enjoyed time there. It was a particularly important location for Filipino students who seemed particularly drawn to alternative / skater culture. The divisiveness of the park was clear – for some it was a place where they felt very much 'in place', for others it was a place where they felt 'out of place'. During our walk we paused at the skate park for some time. Aslan explained how unhappy he was that security guards would move on large groups of children from the skate park even though the park was designed for their use. The graffiti is their way of making an adult-imposed and created space more personalised to them.

#### **8.2.2.4 The youth club – performing masculine identities**

A second adult created space for children frequently mentioned is the Youth Club or Recreational Area for Teens (RAFT) (see Figure 44). It is an area provided by the community / gas companies for teenagers, almost exclusively used by boys. On walks, it was described as a 'place for boys', with some girls actively avoiding the



area. There was an element of secrecy about the club. No photovoice images showed the inside of the club, and participants were reluctant to talk about the club, beyond some stories of friends who had been ‘barred’ from the club for bad behaviour. Inside the club, staffed by volunteers, there are computer games, table football and table tennis. It is described as a general hang-out area. Within the community, the Youth Club has a reputation for behavioural issues. Figure 43 is a brief excerpt from resident meeting minutes:

10	Misbehaving boys at the Youth Club	Clubs/Security	-violent and disrespectful to girls	1	We do talk to kids' parents to be informed
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*Figure 43: Community meeting minutes (Nov 2012): Youth Club concerns*



*Figure 44: The Youth Club: image from walk.*

Sibley (19 p.85) would likely interpret spaces like the Youth Club critically, as a supervised, controlled space for children signalling exclusion, where they ‘have little power to influence the design of the spaces which they have to negotiate’. The main

processes of exclusion occurring here in the Youth Club appear to be based on gender, with girls largely excluded from the space.

#### 8.2.2.5 Children's parks as "places to be kids again"

Parks were also noted as important places, apparent across data, but most notably on walks and in photographs. Children described using parks as places to meet and hang out, even though they are designed for much younger children.

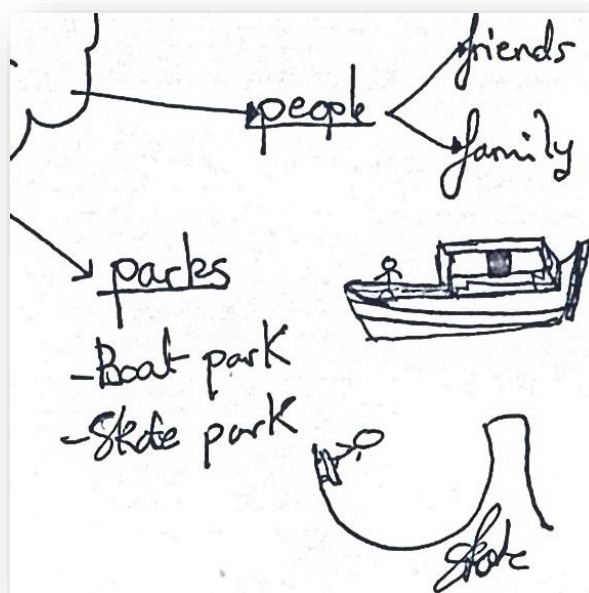


*Figure 45: image for walk in P2: playing the park*

While research does exist exploring adolescent use of parks (for example Babey *et al*, 2008 and Tucker *et al*, 2009), these tend to focus on the impacts of parks, in the sense of wide open public spaces, on physical activity. The use of parks, in the sense of child play areas like in Figure 45, by teenagers is best viewed as a subversive use of space, since they are not the intended users of these spaces. Suspecting the children during walks might just be using parks because of the novelty of the experience, I asked if they were important sites for older children, with many confirming they are, particularly for those with younger siblings.



Parks were also noted in concept maps, supporting this assertion, for example Ibrahim's (Figure 46):



*Figure 46: Ibrahim's important parks*

Parks were also some of the places outside NQC noted as important in photovoice images, for example Rini's (P1) images of parks in Doha (Figure 47).



*Figure 47: 'Al Rumaila park in Doha', Rini's (P1) photovoice image*

Ibrahim's photovoice images (Figure 48) included a number of images highlighting the rules and regulations in parks which he felt were "too many rules".



*Figure 48: "too many rules" in parks: Ibrahim's photographs*

### 8.2.3 Gates and Walls

These physical boundaries – gates and walls - of NQC are understood to be a limiting factor in the agency of children. Where many studies explore the nexus of

parental restrictions and agency of children, the focus here is the physical environment (gated, desert) as affecting agency, mobility and freedom to use space. In both phases the physical reality and symbolism of gates, walls, boundaries and insides / outsides were significant in data. In P1 no specific category of gatedness was devised by the children. Although it was strongly present in data, it was not categorised as such. In P2 the children developed the theme 'gates and walls', primarily in the response to the large number who noted these features on concept maps, sometimes with reference to the NQC as a 'prison', and on maps and in photographs. In fact, a number of children wanted to include the category 'prison', but this was decided against, as it was felt the term was overly pejorative and not inclusive to the experiences of many participants.

The children in both phases were acutely aware of the geographical isolation of their community in terms of physical location and gatedness. It was frequently noted that many had little experience of navigating the local area outside the community independently on foot. Conceptually connected to the theme of insides / outsides, the vast majority of maps of the majority of children living with the NQC compound limited their maps to areas within the compound, and many made reference to the compound setting. Justine (P2), for example, refers to the 'wall around the compound' as a 'dislike' in his concept map (Figure 49), and suggests NQC is 'like a prison'.



Figure 49: Justine and 'the wall around the community' – 'its like a prison'.

Gates and walls in the context of NQC are just one dimension of the securitisation and macro-territorialisation of space, and linked very strongly with 'Safe Places and Security'. In many contexts globally this 'performance of securitisation' (Kathirevlu, 2016 p.147) in gated communities is a result of fears of crime, and lack of faith in the police force. However, in the context of Qatar, other processes are at play, and instead it is 'a cultural fear of the classed "Other", invading and disrupting the order and aesthetics of middle-class spaces'. In such a context, 'safety and security are thus more performed than enforced with any rigidity in gated developments... It is the semblance of exclusivity and safety that exists. Residents themselves acknowledge that heightened levels of safety are more performed than real - further testament that these spaces function primarily as symbols of status' (ibid. p.147). This is an interesting analysis of the role of gates, walls and security checks, and one applicable to NQC, insofar as residents and the gas companies who own the compound, do not wish to have 'outsiders' using the facilities of the compound. However, children perceived and used the boundaries of and within NQC in a variety of ways, sometimes subverting adult intended functions.

#### **8.2.3.1 Walls as sites of play**

One common theme was that walls are perceived both as boundary markers, and as sites of play and transgression. Tom's photovoice image (Figure 50) shows 'his' wall – "we can climb them and they are good for football".



*Figure 50: "My wall" (Thomas, photovoice)*

Walls were therefore not always viewed in terms of hard boundaries - they can become sites of play. This reflects a broader flexible and opportunistic use of space by children (Jones, 2000; Britt, 2010). Jones (2000 p.40) writes that 'boundaries are critical in the structuring of children's lives. These can come in both physical and symbolic forms and often are constructions combining both to varying degrees.' However, for Jones these boundaries are permeable and open to the actions of children as opportunists for transgressing 'adult' space and boundaries.

During walks in P2 many boys showed places where the walls could be climbed and boundaries transgressed. This is very similar to Cele's (2006) findings during her walks with children in Sweden and England, where walls, fences and gates were significant sites for children's play, despite adult warnings not to. Cele (2006 p 118) speculates whether this is because of what they represent – borders between something private or semi-private, and the public. This private-public binary is particularly complex and contested in the context of a GC. She writes that:

'these borders [walls, fences, gates] seem loaded with meaning for children, since they present an easy way to play with what is allowed and what is not. Jumping over a low fence between a private garden and a sidewalk and then quickly back again is way of acting out

something forbidden – to access private property without permission  
– and then to quickly seek shelter again in the public sphere’.

The (older) children in this study noted similar feelings, particular the minority of boys who spent time outside the GC, climbing the walls and sitting against them just outside the community. Although there are no formal rules against this, there was a very strong sense amongst the children that while walls within the GC were acceptable places to climb and play, the perimeter walls (similar height) were not. This demonstrates a strong sense of boundaries, of inside and outside space, and the representational power of boundaries for children.

Another participant who spent a significant amount of time independently exploring the area around the compound was Sari. A key facet of her local environmental experience was her use of ‘wastelands’. For Sari, the walls afforded her some peace, since they discouraged most people from walking outside their boundaries. Her experiences are explored later in this discussion.

#### **8.2.3.2 Walls as a symbolic division: the ‘real world’ vs. ‘not the real world’ and insiders / outsiders**

Insides and outsides (inside / outside the GC) was sometimes explored and articulated in terms of the ‘real world’ in contrast to that of the ‘not the real world’ of the community, as in Farah’s (P2) map in 51. Here, she has articulated a clear sense of the ‘real world’ being located outside the GC, and that the world within is in some way not ‘real’. The boundary between these two worlds is the ‘huge wall outside the community’. Farah explained the ‘unreality’ of the local area within the GC in terms of surveillance, safety and control. Where the GC is controlled and boring (albeit comfortable and safe), the ‘outside’ in contrast is busy and exciting with more things to do.



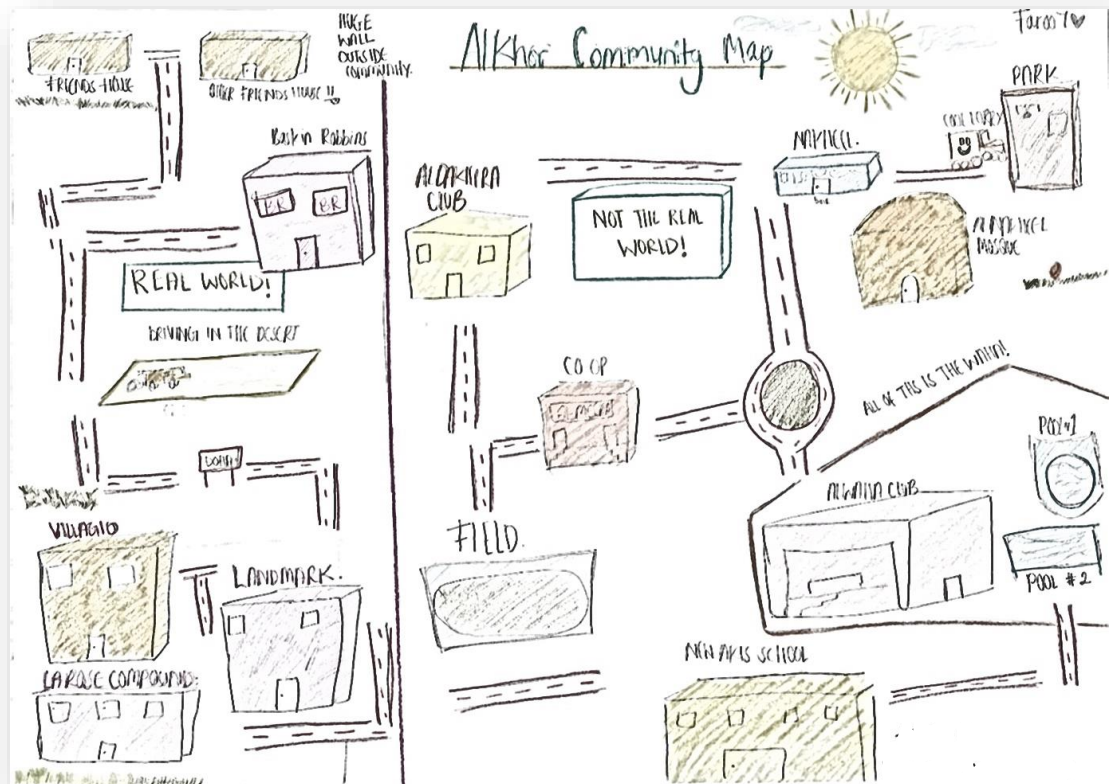


Figure 51: Farah's binary of real vs. unreal worlds – inside and outside NQC (map)

Linked to this theme is that of insiders and outsiders. The children had a strong sense of distinguishing between those who 'belong' inside the community and those who do not, specifically labourers and manual workers. It is suggested that this is to a great degree and outcome of the boundedness of place. In theorizing reasons for this, Relph's (1976) exploration of existential insideness and existential outsideness is useful, as there appear to be oppositional constructions of place, with feelings of both insideness (feeling in-place, part of the community) and outsideness (feeling out of place) expressed.

Constructions of insiders and outsiders emerged as particularly significant during walks with P2 children. In one incident upon encountering a group of (non-resident) labourers during the walk Asma, a girl in the group, remarked that "they always stare at us girls". When asked who "they" were she responded "the people who come in to work in the day but leave at night... cleaners, workers, you know". This clear articulation of the difference between those who live in the community, and those who work within the GC but live elsewhere. Primarily this division is socio-economic – those who live off-site tend to work in lower-status positions doing manual work, and are universally male (all

female community staff live on the compound). This sense of 'us' and 'them' is potentially harmful, as it sets up a strong binary of inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, this is starkly formalised in many community locations where signs announce that facilities are for use of 'residents only'. Non-residents are also not even allowed to enter or purchase items in the local shops.

Several children noted the long lines of visitors at the security gates in concept maps, with Matteo commenting that they 'look like terrorists' when waiting to come in. Another participant, Aida (P1), also noted how cleaners and other non-residents have to queue up to enter the community. Initially she wrote that this made the community feel like a prison, but instead that it makes them seem 'like terrorists' (Figure 52), a clear articulation of othering. This exclusion and difficulty for non-residents to enter is often an annoyance for the children, as noted by Ayman (P2). Some question the justness of this, others the personal inconvenience (for example their private drivers not being allowed in). For Pow, writing about gated communities in China, the movement in and out of workers poses problems for GCs – 'these workers from outside pose an intractable problem for the enforcement of territoriality in gated communities... although security guards make a point of verifying the identities and purposes of workers entering the estate, it is difficult to keep track of them once they are admitted' (p.131). This certainly resonates with the experiences of workers entering NQC.

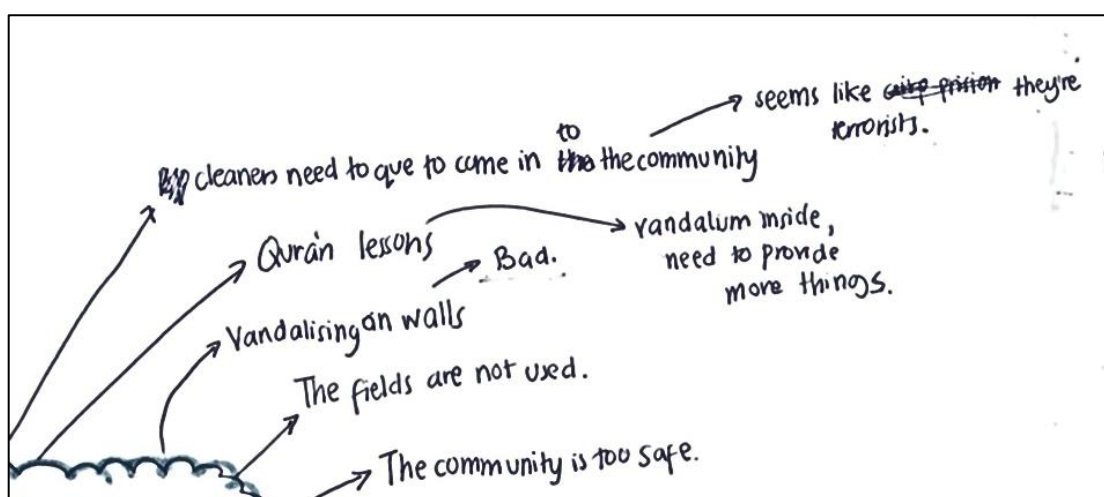


Figure 52: exclusionary practices and othering: Aida's concept map



However, many of the children, including Ayman, also appear to enjoy the sense of security afforded by gated living, despite all the pejoratives and analogies of prison-life. Ayman writes that he feels very secure and safe in the community. This is typical of the contradictory feelings many of the children appear to have with the gatedness of the community juxtaposing the positive sense of safety versus negative feelings of being trapped. A small minority of participants noted some sympathy for non-resident workers on the compound, noting their long work days, lack of freedom of movement, poor working conditions, low pay and low quality off-site housing. Ben commented “it’s not really fair that they can’t go to the co-op to buy drinks or snacks”.

### 8.2.3.3 Emotional responses to gatedness: ‘restricted within walls’ and place as prison

In the context of NQC, of those children who noted the boundedness of their living environment many equated gatedness with security and safety (presumably from real and imagined dangers of the ‘outside’), whereas others articulated a sense of restriction, with analogies of living in a prison occurring frequently. Daniel’s comment of ‘restricted within walls’ but ‘free within self’ is worth considering (Figure 53).

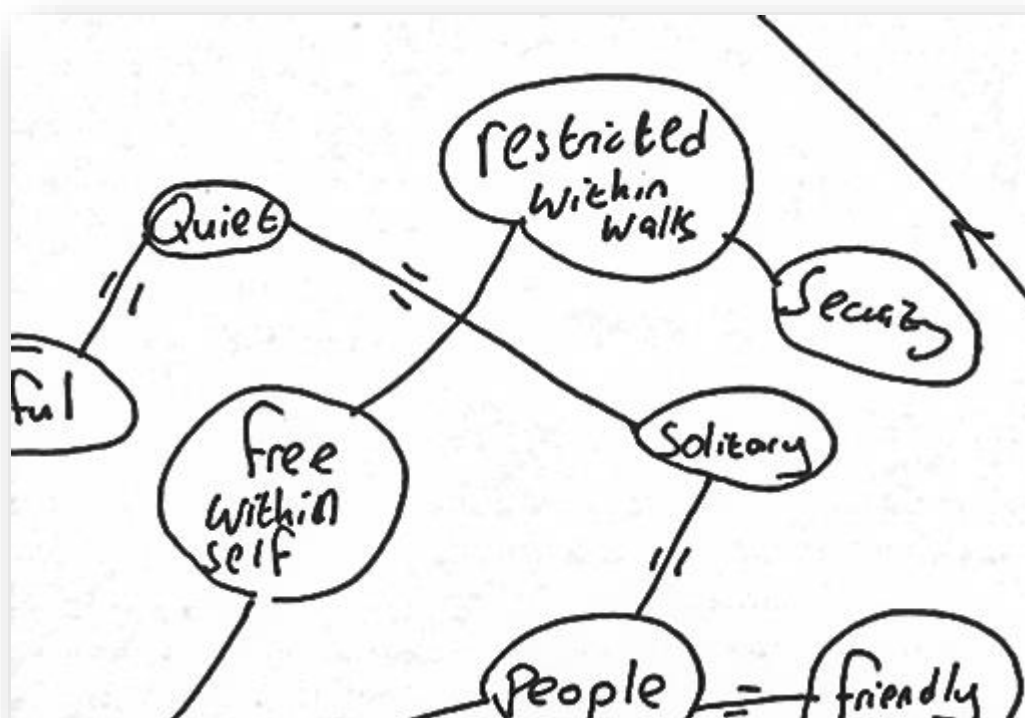


Figure 53: Daniel (P1): ‘free within self – restricted within walls’ – concept map.

Daniel's wording in his concept map is striking, and very personal. He states 'free within self' but 'restricted within walls'. Connected to this is security and below this is the word solitary. Daniel clarified this eloquently saying that he felt:

“free to think and pray but not really free to move where I want. If you live in Doha you can go to more places. You aren't so stuck like us here. In Indonesia when I go back for holidays I don't feel like this. Even though I know Qatar better and have more friends here I still feel freer there [In Indonesia]. My parents still worry about me but I can go out more. In Qatar I spend more time indoors which is kinda solitary. In summer it's too hot to go outside.. and anyway there's nowhere to go. So we usually just hangout in each other's houses or go to the parks but we stick together.. you know...” (Daniel, P1 during small focus group).

It is suggested that the walls do, of course, limit the independent mobility of the children, but that in fact the natural physical environment of rocky desert, and its harshness, is also a key factor in this. As Daniel notes, it is too hot much of the year to spend significant lengths of time outside, in particular outside the community where there is little or no natural shade. Therefore, 'gatedness' should be considered in part an outcome of desert life for the children, restricting their mobility and desire to spend time outside. Similarly, gatedness can be attributed to parental attitudes, and the freedoms given to children.

In P2 references to NQC as a 'prison' were frequent. Jericah notes in her concept map (see Figure 54) the terms 'prison', 'confined', 'private' and 'secure' – all words one would associate with life on a GC. While the term 'prison' is strong, I wonder whether the children *actually* perceive the community as such, or whether they are dramatically asserting a sense of gatedness less severe than imprisonment.

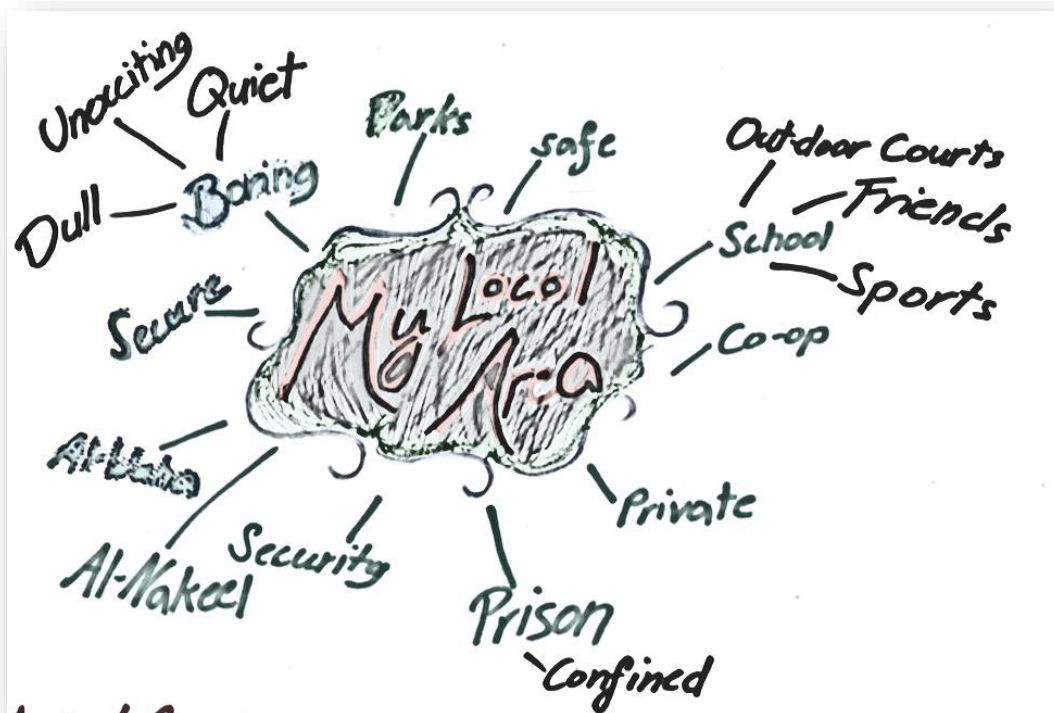


Figure 54: Jericah – place as prison and confined (P2)



Figure 55: sense of gatedness – ‘security making us insecure’: Philip’s concept map

Philip has similar feelings (Figure 55). His concept map is awash with critiques of security and gatedness – in fact most of the text is dedicated to uncovering different facets of gated life including noting that ‘security making us insecure’. This is reminiscent of much research in the USA (e.g. Low 2003, 2008) where gatedness and visible signs of security actually intensified people’s fear of crime and security. Gustav (Figure 56) has similarly intense feelings of gatedness.

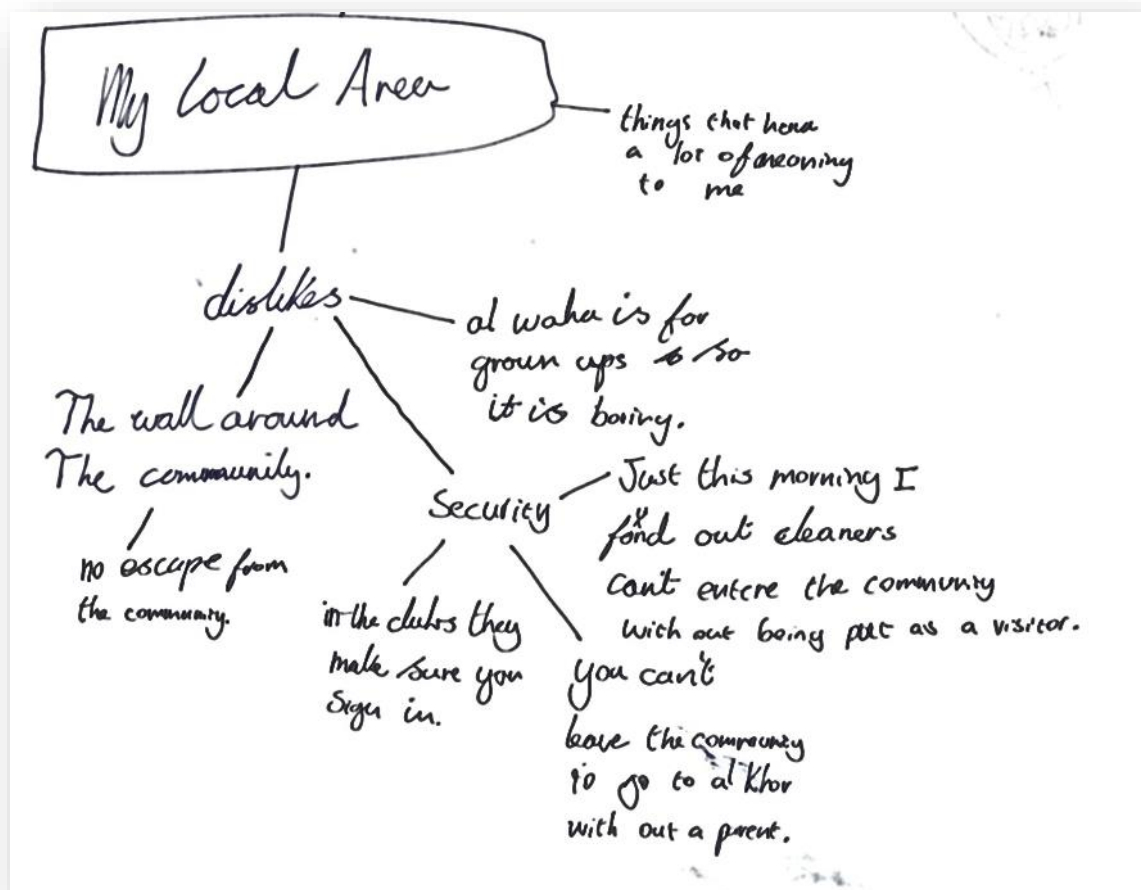


Figure 56: 'no escape from the community' (Gustav)

#### 8.2.3.4 Gates and walls affording security

Existing research also suggests that gatedness can afford children, especially younger children, greater freedom than non-gated residential contexts – 'they [young children] do not necessarily experience the compound walls as confining, but rather find that their confines provide them with a certain degree of freedom in everyday life. To the younger children, the compound is a zone where they can simply move around on their own' (Sander, 2016 p.135). With reference to older children and teenagers, Sander (2014) writes that 'Although they do not express that the walls foster a sense of community, they still echo the globally widespread theme of fortification providing a sense of security. Adult as well as teenage interviewees name "feeling secure" as a positive aspect of compound living' (p.5). Benwell's (2013) research in South Africa explores the impacts of adult imposed restrictions on children's autonomy and use of outdoor space. One child in his study lived in a GC -

similar to that in this study – a place with restricted access for non-residents and a range of security and surveillance measures. At first glance, Benwell sees this space as highly restrictive, regulated – a place denying freedom and the chance to play. However, the child's experience of the area challenged this view that it is restrictive and claustrophobic, instead describing an area of fun and freedom. While the boy, aged 9 (so younger than those in this study) candidly understood the boundedness of his environment, he also recognised that this gave him autonomy and freedom. Similar notions of freedom also emerged in this case study with some children noting that they felt free in the community to move and play independently, although nearly all articulating this were boys rather than girls. Ideas of safety and security are explored in more detail in 'Safe Places and Security'.

#### **8.2.4 Safe places and security**

A recurring theme for many children is the safety and security of the local environment, linked closely to the category 'Gates and Walls'. Safe places and security as a category was referred to both positively, in the sense of the community being a secure and nurturing environment, as well as negatively, both as a place devoid of risk and excitement, 'too safe' and therefore 'boring'. Security was understood both as the patrols of security guards, and more generally as the sense of safety. Three key sub-themes have been identified within the category:

- 1) NQC as 'too safe', including extensive reference to security patrols and security guards as part of this landscape of surveillance. Also refers to challenges of adjusting to less bounded and safe environments when outside NQC.
- 2) Comparisons between safety of NQC and safety in passport countries.
- 3) Fears within the community: the unwanted male gaze and the othering of domestic workers.

'Safe places' and 'security' were noted as two distinct categories by the children, but are being explored together here because of their close interrelationships. The theme of safety, articulated as 'safe places', emerged as a theme for P2 children and both P1 and 2 groups included the category 'security' in the analysis of data. While the children primarily discussed their place experiences with reference to safety, I have expanded the theme to include the spectrum of ideas about safety / security, including spaces deemed unsafe or 'scary'.



*Figure 57: aspects of safety and security*

#### **8.2.4.1 GC as a safe haven / “too safe here”**

One critique of gated communities is that they can foster a sense of danger in the ‘outside’ world, in contrast with the safety and security within the gates (Low, 2003). This could be particularly acute for TCKs living in gated contexts, since it provides a further barrier to host country engagement. In Wilson-Doenges’ (2000) study of feelings of fear and sense of crime comparing gated and non-gated communities found that in high-income communities, those living gated communities reported lower sense of community, but lower fear of crime in their communities. However, in low-income communities the differences were not significant.

Such ideas appear to resonate with Ben (P2) who notes some fascinating insights into place experience with reference to ideas of safety, contrasting NQC and other places he visits, presumably outside Qatar. While he refers to safety in terms of gates, walls, security, he goes on to describe how this results in feelings of being overwhelmed in ‘other cities and towns are large, loud and bustling’. This contrasts with NQC which is ‘underwhelming compared to other towns and cities.. community is quiet and calm’ (Figure 58). Ultimately for Ben, “the outside world is different.. it is stressful and unpredictable” (P2 small focus group). This use of ‘outside world’ sets

up a clear binary of the inside world of NQC, and elsewhere, the former regulated and predictable, the latter much more chaotic in his eyes.



*Figure 58: Ben's fears of place: fights and feeling over-/underwhelmed in place*

Statements about the local area being overly safe, because of the presence of gates, walls, security staff and many rules spatializing where and when activities can take place and by whom, occurred frequently in concept maps. Matteo for example, in his very detailed concept map, outlines many issues connected to restriction of freedom and boredom associated with enforced safety, for example not being allowed to play football in certain areas.



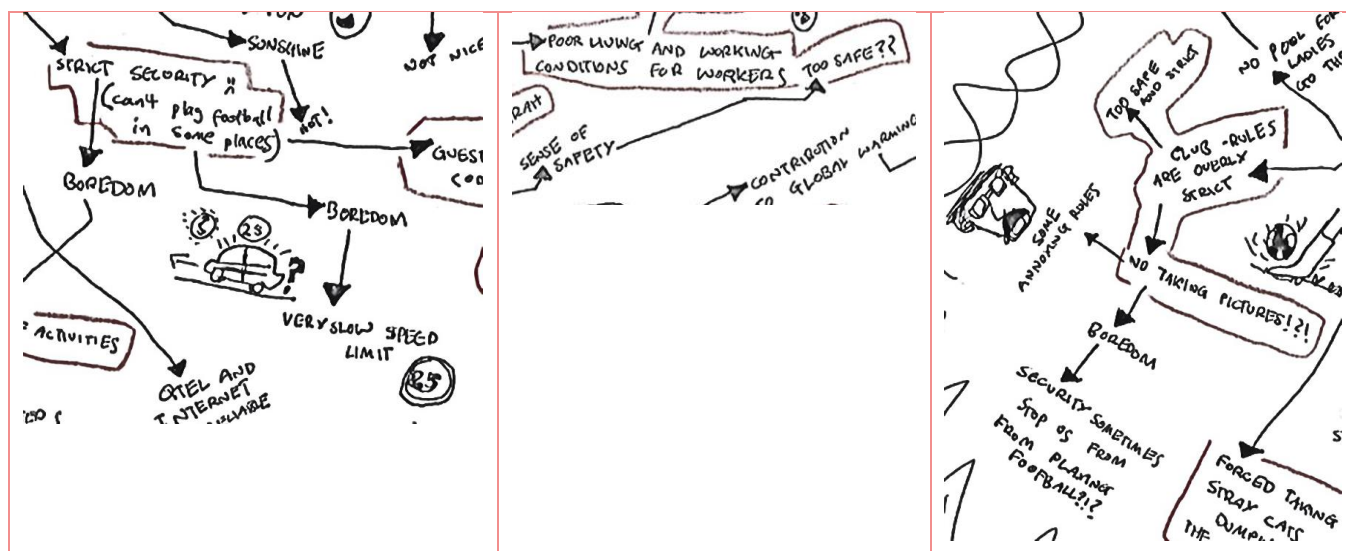


Figure 59: Excerpts from Matteo's concept map highlighting the pitfalls of being 'too safe'.

The relationship between safety, boredom and sense of the community as prison were strongly articulated by many, for example Sara in Figure 60. Here, she claims that the community is very safe, and compares it to a prison – 'it seems like were [sic] in a prison (the wall around the community)'.



Figure 60 Sara's concept map: safety and boredom

She further develops this idea with photovoice images describing Figure 61 as showing how "you can't escape from these guys", referring to the security guards.



Figure 61: "you can't escape these guys" (Sara P2, photovoice image of security patrol car)

References to the community being like a 'prison' were far more frequent in P2 compared to P1, where students appeared to be far more critical of the geographical boundedness and isolation of the location.

Adha even equates safety as being 'lame', and attributes some of the safety to 'parent guidance nearly everywhere' (referring to frequently encountering adults with advice to give).



Figure 62: safety as lame – Adha P1

Feelings of isolation and boredom because of feeling 'too safe' or controlled are also supported by Sander's (2016) research where she writes 'While some teenagers explicitly link the gated compounds to isolation, boredom, surveillance, and restrictions... - they see their homes as safe places, places to meet friends, or to "chill out" (p.140). However, gatedness and associated safety was not always viewed negatively in this study, with a number of children commenting extremely positively about their perceived sense of safety. These ideas are now explored.

#### 8.2.4.2 'I feel much safer here than back home': comparisons with home countries

More positively framed feelings of safety were also noted, often in the context of comparing levels of safety between home countries and NQC, particularly from Palestinian, Indonesian and Pakistani students. This is unsurprising given that for many parents, one motive for moving to Qatar is often increased safety and security for family. Mohammed (P2) noted: "A lot of Palestinians have never been to their country like me. My parents came here to be safe".

Concept maps also noted the area as safer than home countries, for example Aizi's concept map (Figure 63) where she notes that while her home country is 'full of freedom', it is also 'not very safe'.



Figure 63: Aizi – conflict between safety and freedom

It appears that there is an association with freedom and danger here – with lack of freedom presumably being the price paid for perceived safety.

Some children directly and visually explained feelings of safety in NQC compared to home countries, for example Paul (P2), who contrasts fears of intruders in the Philippines, with the safety of NQC in his highly pictorial map in Figure 64.

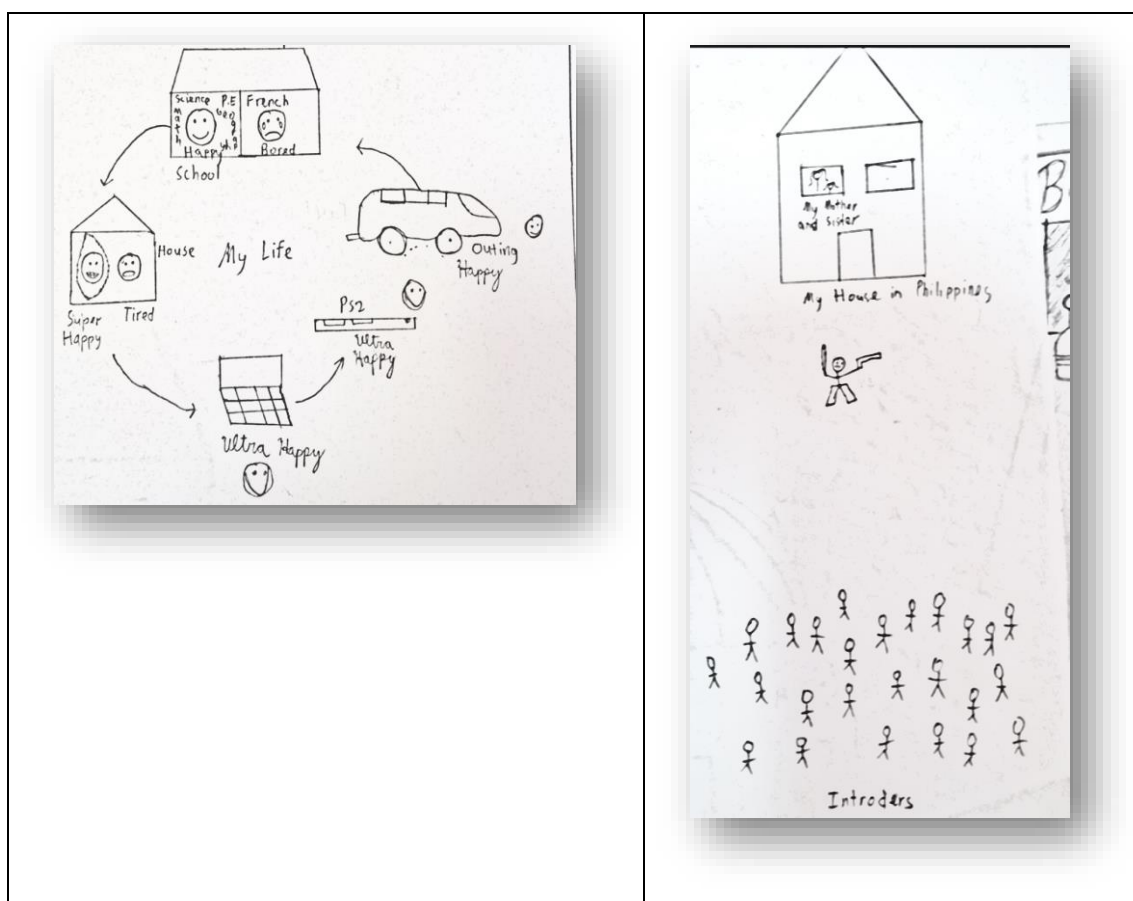


Figure 64: fears in passport countries contrasted with NQC (Paul, P2 map)

#### 8.2.4.3 “It’s not as safe as you think it is”: unsafe places within the local community and the male gaze

Not all participants viewed NQC as a safe haven in a dangerous world, like Paul. Perception of safety is complex – including components such as ‘stranger danger’, injury, road safety and bullying (Carver *et al*, 2008). With reference to children, sense of safety / fear is deeply connected to parents’ concerns (Valentine, 1997). Parents are particularly concerned with stranger danger and road safety, and tend to perceive childhood today as more dangerous than in the past (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997). A number of dangers, real and perceived, were noted by the children in this

study, primarily in concept maps, focus groups and walks. These fears or dangers are summarized below in Table 25. Fears of abduction and the male gaze will be developed further as examples.

Fear	Detail
<b>Environmental fears</b>	Heat, sunburn / sunstroke, scorpions - desert as dangerous. Many girls, and some boys, expressed a desire to keep out of the sun to avoid getting darker.
<b>Physical abuse and bullying</b>	Stone throwing, shouting – from other children. Poor relations between British Stream and Indian Stream students often noted.
<b>Imagined fears</b>	Ghosts, <i>jinn</i> , dark places.
<b>Stranger danger</b>	Manual workers in the community are accused of a number of deviant behaviours: theft, sexual attack, squatting in vacant buildings. Also male gaze as threatening- see below.
<b>Moral fears</b>	Knowledge and fear of deviant activity – drug / alcohol use, sexual activity. Islamic context important here. Fear of being associated with these behaviours.
<b>The male gaze</b>	A number of girls suggested that the community is not safe for them. Most complained of 'men staring' at them, or gangs of boys following them by foot, or by car.
<b>Abduction / kidnap</b>	With reference to younger children and siblings; maids accused of kidnapping.
<b>Fire</b>	A number of arson attacks had taken place during the study – at the school, the co-op and in bins. This was a widely noted fear on walks in P2. Students at the school were to blame.

*Table 25: Fears identified in study – a summary*

Sheikha, whose concept map was explored in 'People and Cultures', clearly articulated fears within her community outside NQC. Notably, Sheikha is one of the few participants who lived off the GC in the nearby village of Al Thakira. Her narrative-rich concept map explores fears of 'runaway maids' sleeping in vacant buildings and kidnap stories: 'quiet – children don't go out to play on the street – mothers to scared due to lots of kidnap stories and runaway maids'. There is a clear sense of distrust of maids, drivers and other household workers. It is common for Qatari families to have several maids to take care of children, cook and clean.

Fear of sexual attack was a difficult issue to talk about with the students. However, during walks it was articulated as a fear by some of the girls. Ahda (P2) spoke at length about the issue during our walk. The key everyday issue appeared to be staring by men, which was noted as being "scary" and "unnerving". The male gaze, or objectifying gaze, is explored extensively in literature (Bartky, 1980; Gervais and Holland, 2013), with the objectifying gaze upon women originating not just from men, but also other women. Foley *et al* (2007, p 186) note that 'women tend to retreat to a 'safe place', predominantly their bedroom, when faced with the prospect of being



subjugated to the 'male gaze' or judgement by an audience in a public sphere'. In another study, Foley (1993) describes how a group of 15 year old girls in Sydney, after finishing a babysitting job in the early morning find temporary ownership of the public space of their neighbourhood – no longer 'under the gaze of adult men and women' (Foley *et al*, 2007 p 186). While 'staring' might not be initially considered a significant fear, for the girls in other studies and this one it is a central concern, and one that arguably has a limiting effect on use of neighbourhood space, and certainly impacts experiences of place and the environment.

The gaze of men can limit use of public space in two ways. Firstly, it can reduce girls' confidence to use neighborhood space by making them feel uncomfortable. Secondly, awareness of the male gaze by parents can create a sense of fear and lead to limiting of freedoms to independently use the local area. It is likely that in Islamic societies, such as that in Qatar, the male gaze is even more significant, where expectations for women and girls to be dressed modestly, adopt certain behaviours and be accompanied by male relatives are so strong. AJ, from the Philippines, noted that she had friends, who despite not being Muslim, sometimes put on the hijab, headscarf, "so people would think they were Indonesian and Muslim and not stare so much" (P2 walk). Thus, it seems the *hijab* is a potential deflector of the male gaze and a means of gaining freedom in public space – a re-appropriation of space through clothing. However, despite their fear of this staring, a number of girls also expressed feelings of pity and concern for low-income labourers who were noted as the main culprits of staring. Some questioned whether the stare was objectifying, questioning whether they might be missing a daughter or other relative back at home, and be reminded of these family members when seeing them.

### **8.2.5 Environment and the outdoors:**

The environment and the outdoors is a combination of the category 'environments' (P1) and 'outdoors' (P2). It encompasses the tangible, physical environment of participants, with particular emphasis on living things and the natural world of landscapes, plants and weather. The first theorised dimension of this category is understandings of 'nature' in the local environment.

#### **8.2.5.1 Nature binary: natural vs. unnatural environments**

Nature is usually contrasted with culture in terms of oppositional binaries, but here, like some of the children, I am contrasting children's conceptions of natural and unnatural environments and landscapes. 'Nature' is understood in this study as a social and cultural construct (Evernden, 1992) and therefore open to deconstruction like any dualism – nature/culture, representation/reality, subject/object. Kong (2000 p.258) writes that 'different social groups construct, access and experience nature in different ways, and there is a need for more detailed and nuanced understandings of such different constructions and experiences'. This is reflected in this study, with contrasting concepts of nature emerging in some of the children's data. Nature appeared in in two generalised and oppositional contexts: NQC as 'natural' vs. NQC as 'unnatural' or devoid of 'nature' (as 'wildness').

Notions of NQC being unnatural were very common in data. Maps and concept maps frequently noted the environment within the community as being unnatural. Here the children are questioning the sustainability and naturalness of all the greenery and trees in what is a pure desert region. Nabeel contrasts concepts of nature in Pakistan, which is appears to conceive as home and his local area, and Qatar (Figure 65). Daniel (see Figure 67) appears to have deconstructed the nature-not-nature binary.

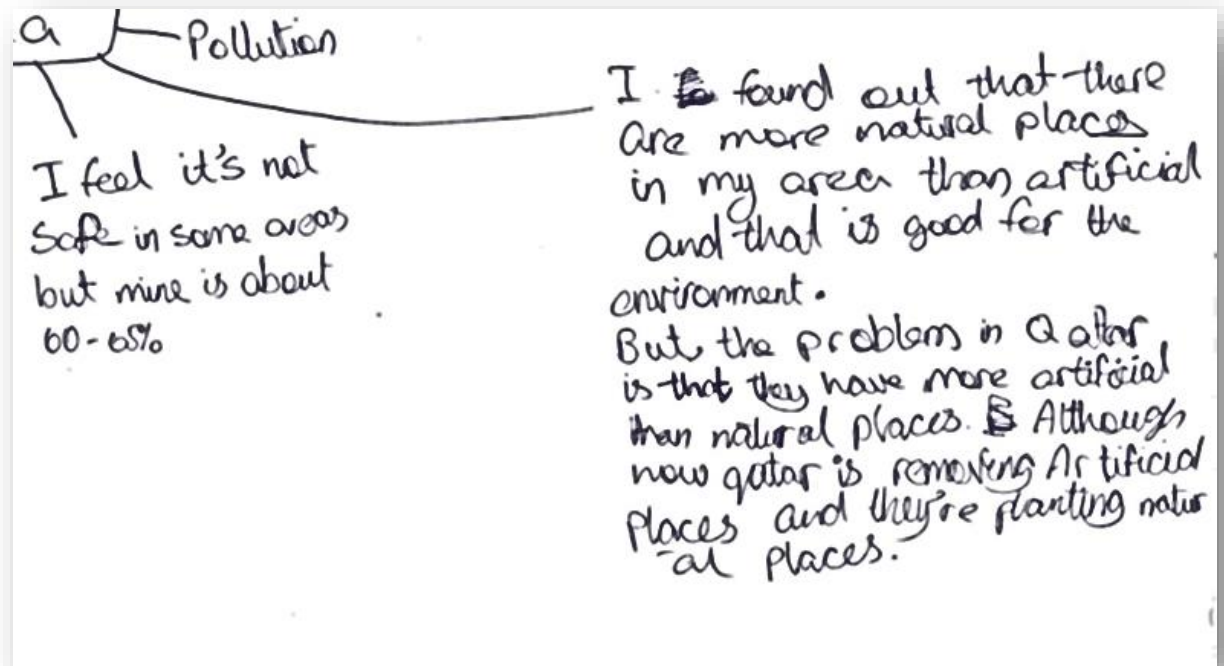


Figure 65: Nabeel questioning nature and naturalness

Unfortunately, I was not able to clarify and confirm Nabeel's meaning here with him, but his comments show a division between perceived naturalness and artificialness. Ziad in P2 made a comment, somewhat in jest, that "you could replace with plastic trees and it wouldn't matter". At the heart of this statement is that the physical environment of NQC is perceived as unnatural, with its lush greenness contrasted with the desert outside. However, since there is no objective definition of 'naturalness' it is unsurprising that concepts of nature are contested. For some children, the green environment of the community (trees, grass, manicured gardens) was positively identified as 'nature'. Whereas others associated nature more with the dominant physical environment of the desert. Nature was also very broadly understood simply as the outdoors for many of the children. Ideas about environmental sustainability also emerged, for example as in the concept map below:



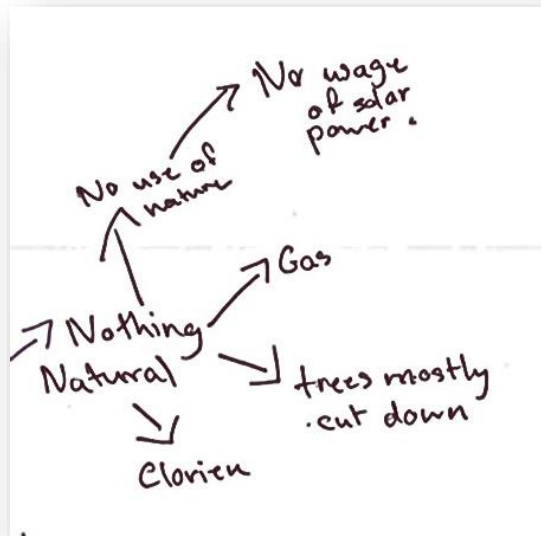


Figure 66: 'nothing natural' – questioning environmental sustainability of NQC



Figure 67: 'Feels natural' 'but isn't ☹' (Daniel concept map)

Daniel's 'feels natural' 'but isn't ☹' comment appears to reflect a critique of the environment of NQC, and critical engagement with concepts of nature. The sad face is telling. He elaborated in a focus group saying "It feels natural because it's green but isn't because it depends on people watering and keeping it looking like that. Natural here means desert not fake".

Therefore, he is contrasting nature in the sense of natural biodiversity / ecosystem of Qatar, vs. the transplanted and human-dependent greenness of NQC.

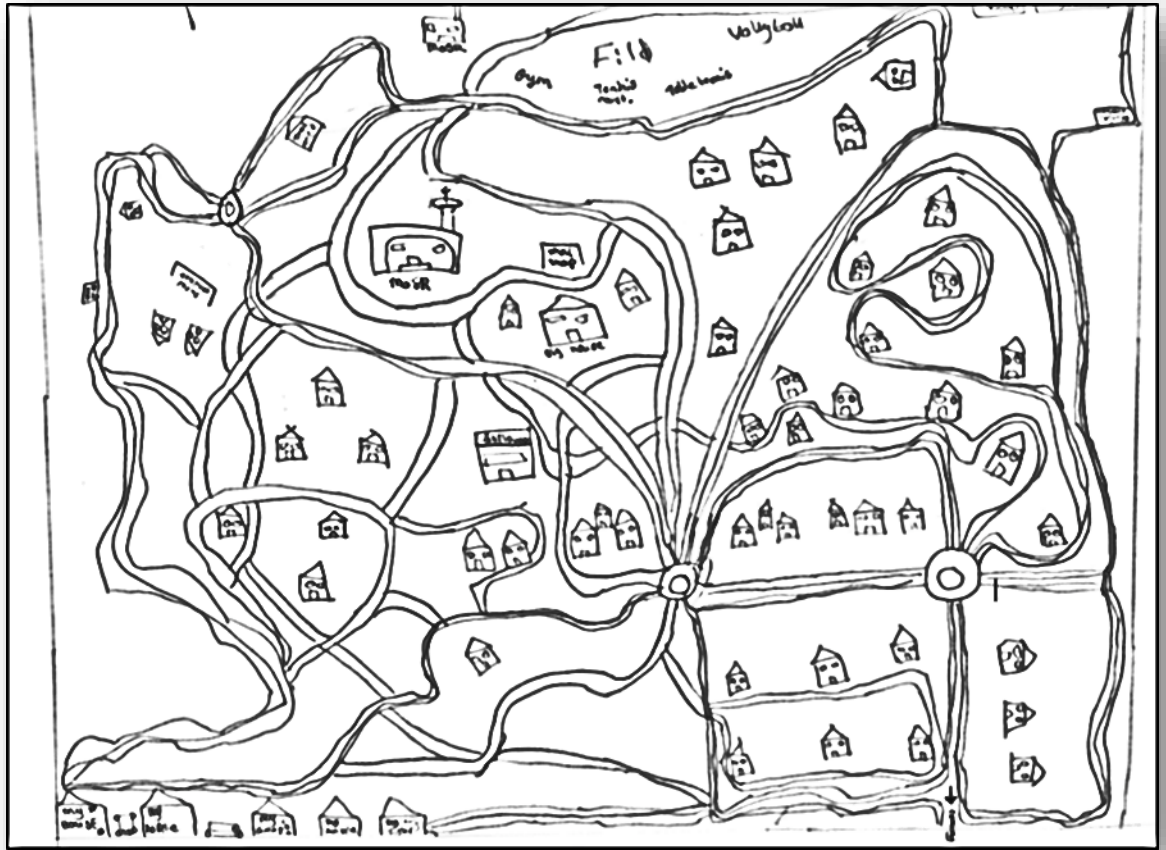
#### 8.2.5.2 Breaking the boundary between community and physical environment: indigenous voices

Through discussions with the children it became apparent that very few had a developed knowledge of the environment surrounding the GC. Figure 68 summarizes the key reasons identified for lack of and exploration of the wider area highlighted in data, notably focus group interviews.



*Figure 68: Factors limiting independent exploration outside NQC*

There were however exceptions to this gated experience of place, notably from Qatari boys not resident in NQC (a small minority of students). Majid (P1) talked at length during our big focus group about experiences in the local area, on foot and in cars which he had access to, despite not legally being allowed to drive. Majid talked about driving in the desert and exploring the local area with falcons, offering a more indigenous voice about place. He frequented beaches and had access to a boat. His local area map deviates from the more typical grid-like maps drawn by the majority of children suggesting different uses and experiences of the local area – most likely due to not living within the confines of NQC.



*Figure 69: Majid's desert life*

The map drawn by Majid (Figure 69) suggests a radically different construction and experience of place with a wider variety of features noted, providing some evidence that the experiences of local Qataris, in particular boys, is radically different to that of expatriate children, and Qatari girls. The straight lines of most of the maps drawn by those children resident in the compound are replaced by winding lanes with an emphasis on connectivity, perhaps a reflection of the social connections between families' resident in the predominately Qatari villages around the compound. It is interesting to note that these roads do not in any way match the actual network that exists in his home area, but are more representational and imagined.

In Majid's concept map (Figure 70), he refers to time spent in the desert and in conversations he exhibited a great deal more environmental understanding than many other participants. He was keen to talk about the use of falcons to catch rabbits in the desert, and exhibited great pride in his indigenous knowledge of the area. This engagement with the natural environment, together with being from Qatar,

demonstrates a stronger sense of place attachment. Indeed, he writes 'home' – 'because it is my country' in his concept map. He is proud of his local area, and keen to share his experiences with other people. This is in stark contrast to most of the children resident in NQC who had very limited experience of the wider local area beyond the compound and Doha's malls. I would argue that the voices and experiences of children like Majid have a great deal to offer TCK children in their understandings of place.



Figure 70: Majid's concept map: a Qatari sense of place

### 8.2.5.3 Secret Places, special places in NQC

Secret places, often also called special places, were identified as important for the children within NQC. Wastelands and open spaces just outside NQC were used by some, for example Sari, as individual places of solitude and peace. Secret places within NQC were often highlighted as important during walks with P2 children. They were keen to identify hiding places and alternative uses for spaces which most adults are likely unaware of. One example of a 'secret place' was identified as an area behind bushes where an air conditioning unit blows out cold air (see Figure 71).



Oblivious to this place, it was identified by the children as an important place to hang out, especially in the hotter months. This highlights how children use places in ways completely different to adults, attaching alternative meanings to place. The children relished in showing me this place, bemused that I was previously unaware of it since it was entirely out of the realm of my everyday experience of the community. In the extreme heat of Qatar's summer, the children complained of feeling locked up inside during these months. This secret spot offered the chance to be outside, away from the gaze of adults, but also cool.



*Figure 71: a communal 'secret' and cool place – hidden air conditioning vent*

Secret places appear as significant in other research, for example Roe's research into children's place experience and Green's (2012) exploration of the relationship between special places and place attachment and place identity in children. For the children in her study, secret places were an integral part of their local environment. The children had a need to have places near home, but outside adult supervision, to interact with. For the children in Roe's study, it was absolutely vital for these places

to remain secret for them to be significant to them. Adult use of these places would diminish their 'specialness': 'when the grass was long, it indicated that adults probably had not been there for a while and if it was cut, it would indicate that it was no longer a secret place and consequently would no longer be special' (Roe, 2007 p.477). This raises ethical implications of research revealing these places. In the context of this research it is hoped that children only revealed their 'secret' locations if they wished to – the assumption is any child wishing to keep such places secret will have done so.

Fitri in P1 made extensive reference to his secret places. For Fitri the environment of NQC was perceived as natural. He makes several references, in concept maps and data analysis, to natural landscapes in NQC, where he is referring to non-landscaped pockets of desert more reminiscent of landscapes outside NQC. Fitri uses these spaces to unwind and ride bikes, often alone (see Figure 72). Similar to Sari, these spaces afford him the chance to spend some time alone away from friends and family.



*Figure 72: Fitri's 'natural spaces' within NQC – spaces to decompress (photovoice image)*

So, despite often critically representing their local environment as 'boring' or a 'prison', many children had a special relationship with the local area, with secret and special places. This is reminiscent of Matthew's *et al*'s (1998 p.195) study of young teenagers' experiences of their local area in a deprived community in the UK Midlands:

'Local places clearly matter to these teenagers. Their accounts suggest a strong affective sense of their everyday worlds, with a wide variety of settings valued for different reasons. Four kinds of 'special place' are consistently represented and comprise important parts of their microgeographies: places away from authority; places to be with friends; places for adventure; and places for solitude'.

All these kinds of special places are present in NQC, despite it being such a contrasting environment to that explored by Matthews *et al* (1998).

#### **8.2.5.4 Transgression of boundaries to find secret and peaceful places**

Discussion here is closely linked to the category 'Gates and walls'. The key distinction is the 'special' and 'secret' places discussed here relate specifically to places just outside the physical boundaries of NQC, where it is understood that their 'specialness' is derived, in part, through the transgression of the physical boundaries of NQC. Therefore, I am speculating whether these secret places, so rich in meaning for the small number of children who used these sites, would be so special to their users if there were no walls or gates – does the transgression of boundaries and entry to a more liminal zone, in part, inscribe place with more meaning and significance?

Sari in P1 was particularly conscious of the gatedness of her local environment, making several references to it in her data. Her map is particularly rich in information because of her annotations. She draws two layers of gatedness – first the walls of the compound, followed by the fence further away towards to highway that leads to the community (Figure 74). Figure 73, one of Sari's photovoice images, shows her 'wasteland' and the 'metal gate fencing' mentioned in her map.



*Figure 73: 'wasteland and fence' (Sari photovoice)*

For Sari the area outside the walls, her so-called 'wasteland', is a very personal, liminal space – a place of artistic expression and solitude. She does not use the space for smoking which she describes as 'pathetic', but to collect 'junk' for her photography (Figure 74). Roe (2007 p.477) notes the importance of such spaces for younger children: 'there is a general loss of potentially unmanicured and 'found places' within the play ranges of children. Such places are often regarded by adults to be semi-derelict and neglected land, but they provide considerable affordances for children'. In line with Roe's findings, despite the negative connotations of the term 'wasteland', for Sari this term is used positively. Indeed, she calls it a 'wasteland' not because it is devoid of meaning or life, but instead because 'junks and wastes are left there' (Figure 75). Normally this would be perceived as negative, but for Sari such 'waste and junks' allows the potential for artistic expression through photography. In Figure 74 she eloquently describes the area – 'the smell is clear of fresh air', 'sound of birds' and 'nothing but plain sand with rocks and dead leaves'. Given the stark nature of the environment, this is a strikingly poetic description of what is, to the gaze of many, a somewhat featureless and bleak landscape, further evidence of how



children can assign their own meanings not constrained by the experiences and ideas of adults.

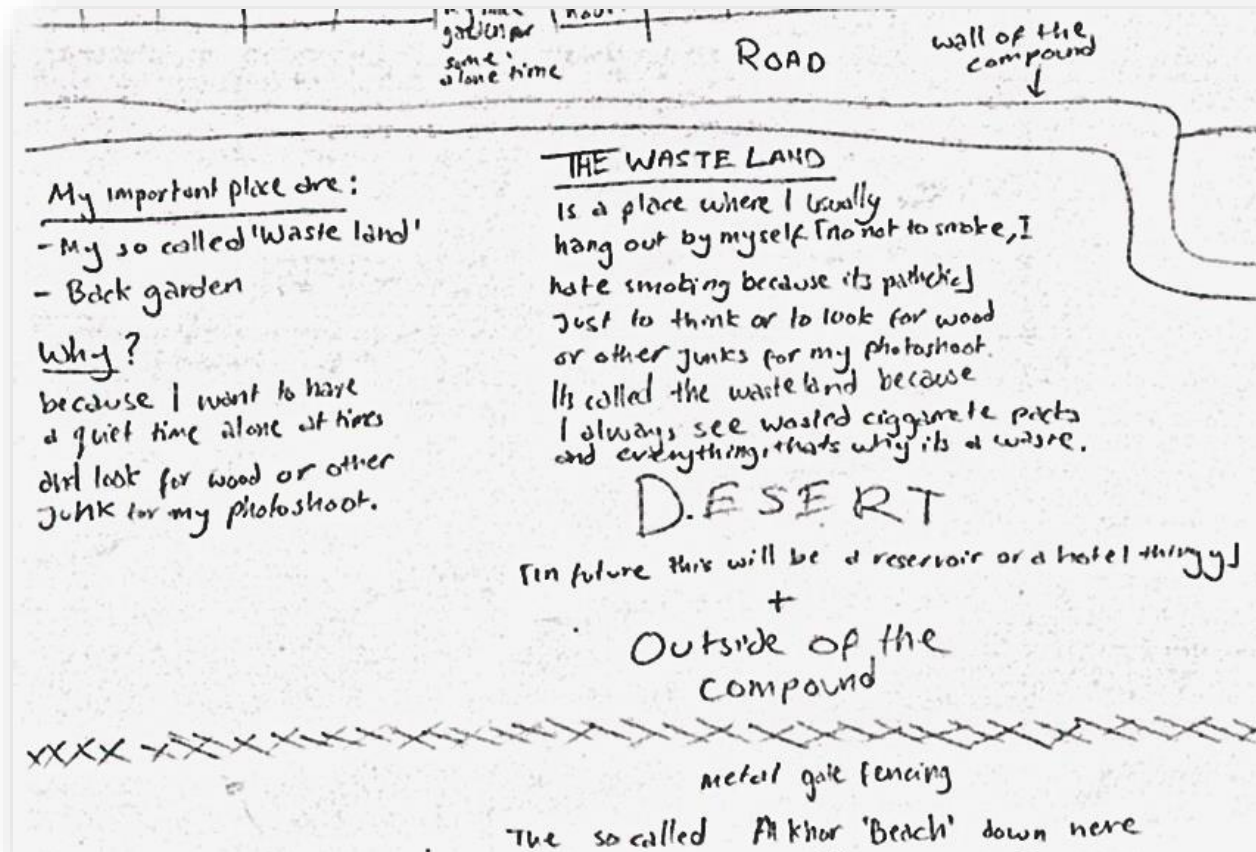


Figure 74: Transgressing boundaries and individual meaning-making: part of Sari's map

Sari's transgression of boundaries and creative use of place contrasts with that of some participants who described how "going over the walls" was a euphemism for what was perceived as deviant behavior: smoking, drinking and mixing between boys and girls. With reference to the latter, the predominately Islamic cultural context should be noted. It was as if for some of the children the area just outside the compound, sheltered by the walls, a liminal space emerged where temporarily normal 'rules' could be abandoned.



Figure 75: Sari's connection with wastelands and outdoor space including garden (concept map).

However, Sari was not alone in finding solace in the spaces outside NQC. Figure 76, a photovoice image from Mohammed in P1, shows his 'hiding place' just outside the compound walls. However, independent exploration of the wider environment, for example the desert rock formations and nearby coastline, was almost entirely absent from the data. Instead, those choosing to spend time independently outside NQC, did so within meters of the walls of NQC, suggesting an understanding of a certain 'safe' range.



*Figure 76: Mohammed's 'hiding place' at the boundary of NQC (P1 photovoice image)*

### **8.2.6 Home and homes**

In many senses the significance of homes in terms of local place / environment experience was not fully anticipated. Indeed, prior to collecting data I had envisaged focus on the local environment separate from the domain of home and school. However, both home(s) and school were fundamental elements of data, and central to children's place experience in NQC. This could be a reflection of gated living – where home, school and play are all packaged in one bounded area. Home was a category noted in both phases, and was generally the first category to emerge.

Homes were noted in the following contexts:

- own home in Qatar as a special place.
- friend's homes as sites of socialization.
- homes and materiality – the importance of bedrooms, bathrooms and belongings (framed as the 'three Bs' of home).
- home as family.
- concepts of multiple homes – contrasting Qatar with passport country as home.

Discussion here will focus on homes and materiality, home as family and concepts of multiple homes.

#### 8.2.6.1 Homes and materiality: the significance of bedrooms, bathrooms and belongings

Here the domestic and microspace of the bedroom, bathrooms and personal belongings emerges as pivotal in many children's experiences of place. Bedrooms and personal artefacts and possessions were frequently noted in concept maps as significant locations, often connected to possessions, in particular computers and exploration of the online world, suggesting many of the children spent a great deal of time in their rooms using computers and mobile devices (see Figure 78). This resonates with Sander's (2014) research of German teenager's experiences of gated communities in Shanghai. With reference to the importance of bedrooms she writes, 'Students' own bedrooms are also hangout places and play a crucial role in small-scale processes of place-making. The rooms display a plethora of belongings and often contain pictures and other materials that rhizomatically connect these places with other sites, friends and family' (p.5).

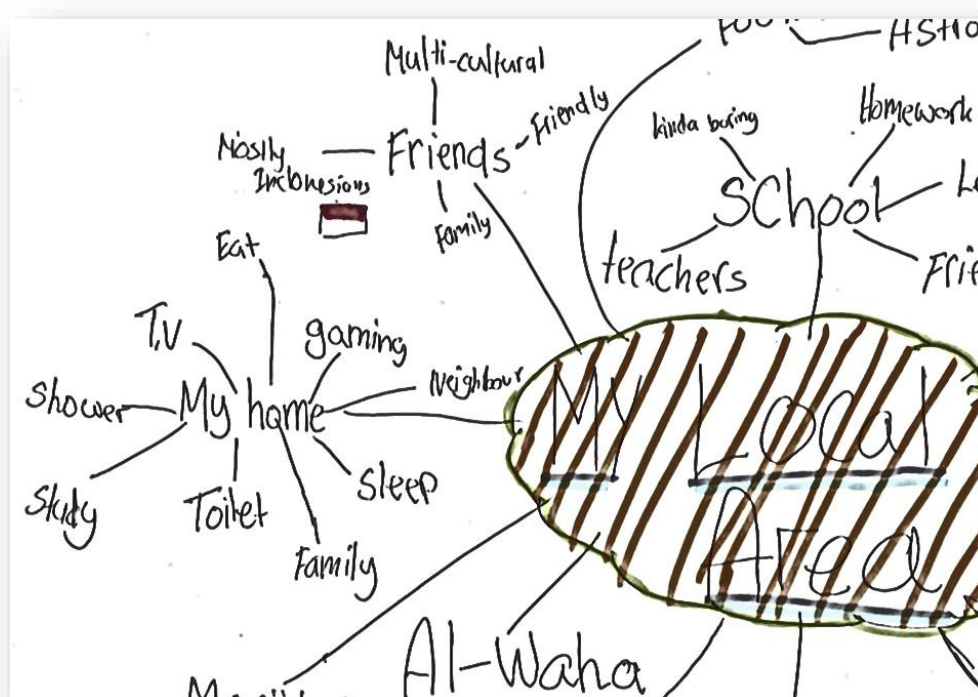


Figure 77: Adha and her home

The significance of bathrooms was a common feature for the participants. It was noted by a number of participants, including Adha, often as a private space to truly be alone (see Figure 77 and 105). Many participants come from large families, so it can be speculated that the bathroom offers a place of true sanctuary. To draw upon Foucaultian analysis, the children are living in an environment that is subject to a great deal of surveillance – parental, community and security – making bathrooms a place outside the gaze of others. As Hackett *et al* (2015 p.xi) note:

‘The need for a private space for their becomings emerges as crucial in research about energy use in bathrooms where children engage through their sensing bodies with everyday environments of showering and bathing. This need can be at least partly understood in terms of the over-regulation of children and public spaces/places evident in adult-designed children's playgrounds.’

In discussions children reflected on the sensory and emotional experiences of bathrooms – as peaceful places away from any surveillance of the public kind (ubiquitous security) or private (parents, siblings). Bathrooms also afforded opportunities to discretely use technology away from the gaze of others.

The connection between bedrooms and material possessions was summarized nicely by Sumeira (P2):

“My room is my favourite place because it has all my stuff in it. It is full of memories and.. like.. a place that is mine. I have my old toys, clothes and special things my family gives me. Each thing in there has memories for me like things from holidays”.

Similarly, Shrouq notes many of her material comforts in her concept map (Figure 79). Note also how she describes being scared of the desert outside the compound, reinforcing concepts of safety being inside the walls, danger outside (environmental and human).

Crang (2005 p 172) writes about material culture and ‘things’ emphasizing ‘the role of things in cultural processes of making distinctive ways of life and giving meaning to the world, its places and people’. The study of material culture and objects is cross-disciplinary, with archaeology, anthropology, museology and history leading the field.



Despite this, as noted previously, in much of the research exploring expatriate identities and experiences of place, the absence of reference to the physicality of how people experience place is conspicuous – location, objects, physical place are often omitted or given minimal reference. However, in her ethnographic study Walsh explores the material aspects of belonging on a domestic scale (the home) with reference to British expatriates in Dubai. Through the study of objects, Walsh shows how material objects in the home can transfer important memories of other places into everyday life, in a similar way to practices of cooking and eating. Thus, Sumeira's, and other children's reference to the importance of objects at home, and in bedrooms, is arguably important in her sense of place and identity in NQC.



*Figure 78: Ikhsan: 'the most important place for me is my bedroom and computer'.*

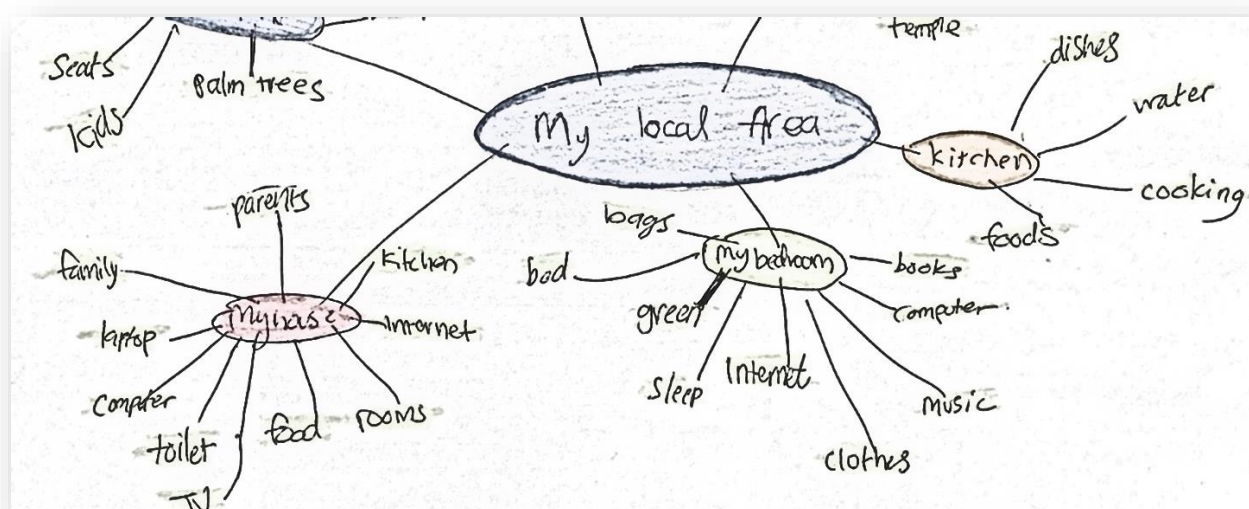


Figure 79: Shrouq's comforts of home: posters, bed and technology

Tolia-Kelly (2004, p 317) states that objects, 'are connective markers to geographical nodes of identification. Through their prismatic nature, 'other' lives, lands, and homes are made part of this one'. Thus, for Sumeira and other children in this case study, objects at home arguably form an important part of their place attachments, identities and thus experiences of place. Tolia-Kelly explains that material objects act as a buffer of sorts from outside cultures, and help to create a sense of identity and belonging somewhere, even if that is not the place of current residence. Therefore, possessions for children can form the basis of concepts of home and place. As De Pres (1991) suggests, having control of space, for example the space of a bedroom, is an important marker of 'home'.

It was noted that homes, objects and domestic spaces were noted more frequently in girls' concept maps than boys. A number of studies globally suggest that girls do not have the same access to public space as other groups in society, and therefore

spend more time in their homes, their bedrooms and their friend's bedrooms (McRobbie & Nava, 1984; Foley *et al*, 2007).



*Figure 80: the dominance of domestic spaces and objects in Ayu's experiences of place*

In Ayu's concept map (Figure 80) the domestic sphere of the home, under three categories of 'my house', 'my bedroom' and 'kitchen', dominates. While generally focusing on physical places / spaces and activities undertake at home, Ayu noted in conversation the importance of home stating that "it is where I feel most comfortable and happy".

#### 8.2.6.2 Home as family

Family was noted as a crucial element of place across data, most notably in photovoice images and concept maps. Family was often discussed during data analysis, for example with reference to constraints on independent mobility, curfews, roles and responsibilities in the family. Family was particularly important for Qatari children participating, all of whom noted family in some respect in visual data – for example mapping the location of different family member's homes or special places (see Figures 81 and 82) – with family understood in terms of extended families. For non-Qatari children resident on NQC family was more nuclear in focus – with the physical space of the home as the primary family space. Activities undertaken with family members were often noted in photographs, for example shopping or attending prayers at mosque.



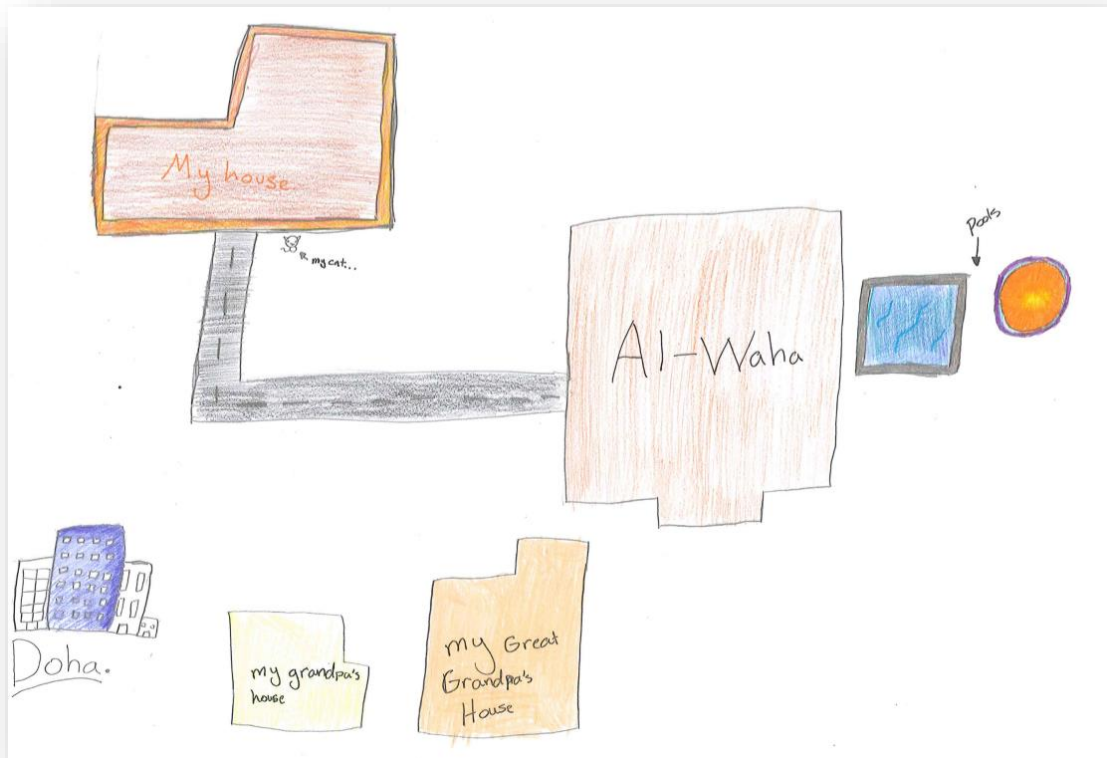


Figure 81: Sumaia's map – family locations (P2)

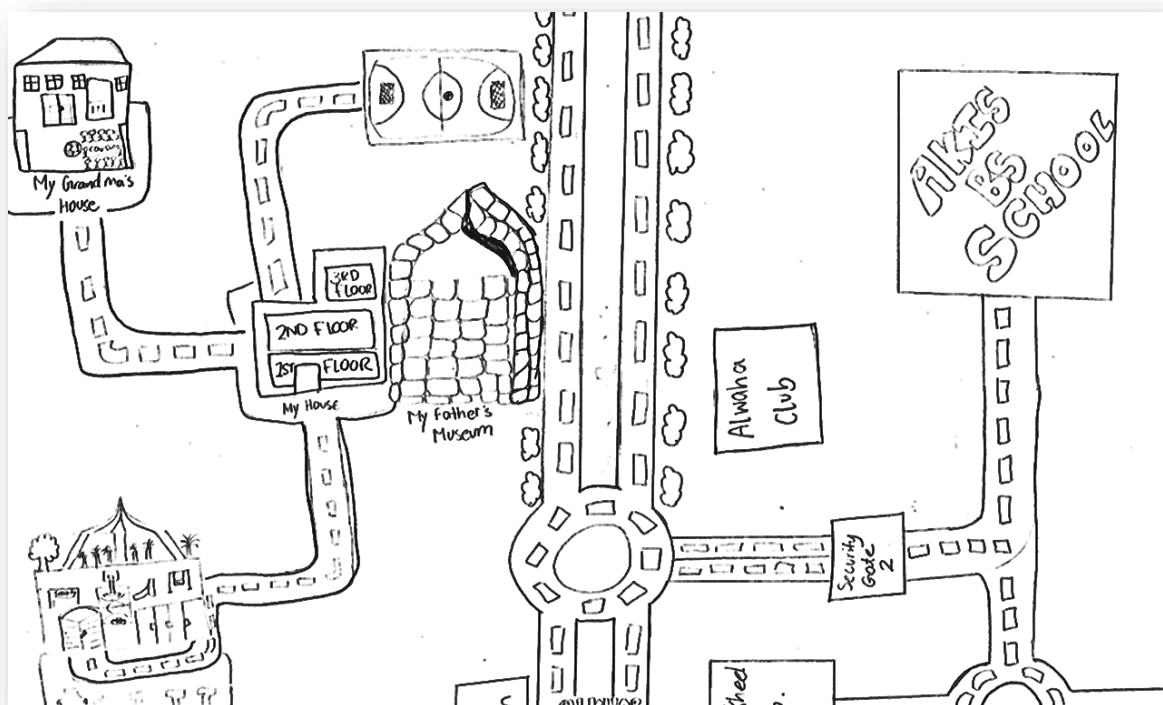


Figure 82: Al Dana – family in the local community and her father's museum

In such a small nation, family connections between Qataris are a complex web of connections, especially in more peripheral parts of the country like Al Khor and Al Dhakira. Qatari culture also emphasises the importance of family. Al Dana's connections to the area clearly run deep, and her father has a 'family museum' (centre of Figure 82, image in Figure 83) containing heirlooms and items of local interest. This is not open to the public, but a fascinating example of preservation of intergenerational knowledge. The rapid pace of change in Gulf societies often means nations fear loss of cultural identity, and museums and heritage villages are a means of preserving culture and negating forces of globalisation in Qatar and neighbouring countries (Picton, 2010a), although this personal museum is particularly interesting as a means of preserving history, identity and knowledge.



*Figure 83: 'my family museum': Al Dana's photovoice image*

#### **8.2.6.3 Multiple homes: Qatar and distant homes**

There was also reference to homes away from the local area, i.e. in home countries. This deviates away from an understanding of the local environment, but is still significant, suggesting multiple understandings of home and 'local area' in a more global and transnational sense – something akin to a 'global sense of home'. This

supports Franke's (2008) theorisation of TCK 'multiple homes' and home as 'imaginative' rather than actual location. Similarly, many of the children in this study had multiple understandings of the word local – as their immediate environment in Qatar, but also hometowns in other countries, suggesting a 'global sense of local', which is blurred and contested. Angie, for example, in her concept map writes about the environment in her hometown in Indonesia rather than Qatar, with it's blue sky, mountains, rice fields and awesome (sic) places (Figure 84), conceptualising this as part of her local area.



Figure 84: multiple understandings of home and the local (Angie's concept map)

Contrasts were sometimes made between home in Qatar and home(s) elsewhere, often centred around ideas of increased levels of physical comfort in Qatar. Children frequently referred to the luxury and comfort of life in Qatar when compared with homes elsewhere. Dhea noted in a small focus group that:

"In Indonesia we don't have air con and there are lots of mosquitos. It's hard to sleep ... Qatar is much more modern. When I visit my grandmother it kind of feels weird and people treat me differently to my cousins there like that I don't know anything".

Her concept (Figure 85) map makes reference to 'home', 'luxury' and comfort, a clear reference to the rise in economic status migrants often achieve when moving to Gulf countries.



Figure 85: Dhea's creature comforts of home.

### 8.2.7 Religious places

Although categorized within the broader analytical concept of physical space, this theme in fact covers a spectrum of physical places (such as mosques, homes, education centres) as well as imagined places, such as haunted or 'evil' locations, although these too are tangible, identifiable and bounded places to the children. In P1 it was termed 'religion', in P2 'religious places'. This discussion will explore the theme from the two key perspectives – religious places and metaphysical spaces. Although the term metaphysical was not used by the children, it best encompasses the wide range of references to ghosts, spirits and haunted places made. While few other studies of children's place experiences make reference to religiosity / spiritual



understandings of place, this is perhaps a reflection of the locations they have taken place – mostly in Europe, North America and Australia, regions where religious life and spirituality are arguably less engrained into daily life than in the Middle East, where Islam is a dominant force in culture and understandings of the world.

#### 8.2.7.1 The importance of religious sites

Sites of worship, specifically mosques, feature strongly across all data sets. Few maps, concept maps or photos did not include some reference to mosques and religious sites such as home-based prayer groups and locations for Quran studies. Research exploring the relationship between religious sites and place construction / experience are lacking in current literature.



*Figure 86: 'My mosk' (sic) – Majid's photovoice image*

As well as mosques, such as that in Figure 86, children also noted home-based religious groups and Dar Al Aqam, an Islamic community centre and madrassa offering Quran and Arabic lessons. Dar Al Arqam was not always presented in a positive light, often being referred to as boring and dirty inside (see Category 'School

and Education' for further discussion of Dar Al Arqam as a place of education). Home-based religious groups were noted by Daniel:

"I know some people have prayer groups in their homes. Christians and Muslims... I think some of the teachers go to church at school on Sundays. In Ramadan people get together more for Iftar and breaking fast". (small focus group P1).

Some of the boys noted that mosques are a place where divisions in the community are broken down. Describing Friday prayers, Safwan said:

"At mosque we are all brothers. It doesn't matter what car you drive or whether you live in a villa or apartment.. everyone is equal in the mosque". (big focus group, P2)

Majid explained the importance of the mosque as a place of peace, stating:

"It's where us Qataris feel peaceful. Even when school is busy and dad is busy we can feel peace in there". (big focus group P1).

However, for Muslim girls, spirituality and religion is centred more around the home. Sheikha, for example, noted how she prays at home, in her bedroom, whilst her father and brother attend the local mosque on Fridays. This further emphasizes the fraternal experience of Friday prayers for boys in the community.

#### **8.2.7.2 Metaphysical places and good / bad places**

The sub-category metaphysical places encompasses imagined spaces and places considered haunted or dangerous. I was surprised by the extent of such beliefs, given the age of the children. Nabeel, from Pakistan, in P2 notes in his concept map (Figure 87) 'In Qatar the differences are it's quite [quiet], peace, too much security and it's kind of scary, and haunted because it gets too quite [quiet] at night'. He goes on to write 'places I don't like to go are noisy places, busy places, dangerous and haunted places'. In discussions he talked about the presence of *jinn* (spirits) and how

these reside in natural objects like trees. In a focus group (P2) he noted “I don’t know if I really believe in them but I think I do”.

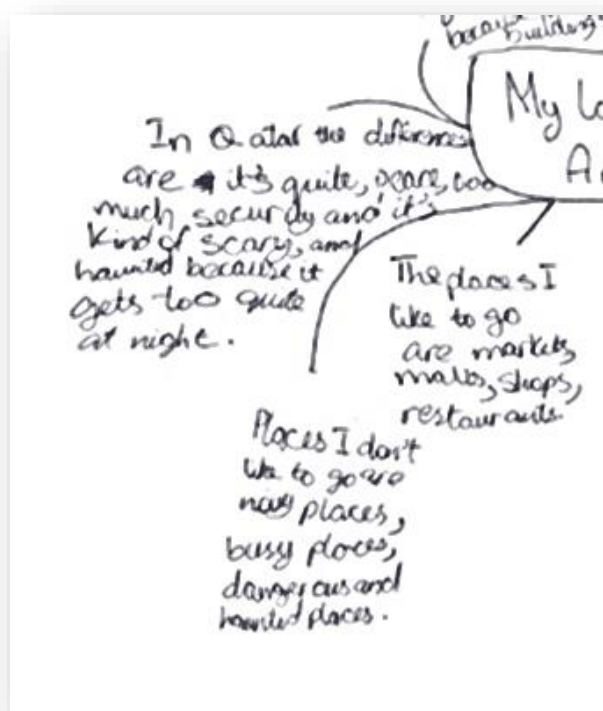


Figure 87: ‘places I don’t like to go are noisy places, busy places, dangerous and haunted places’ (Nabeel’s concept map).

Other studies of children’s experiences of place show the importance of imagined fears for children. Porter *et al* (2011) in their study of children’s mobility, using walking as a method (described as ‘mobile interviews’) found in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa that ghosts and spirits formed important aspects of children’s place experience and journeys, especially for younger people. Children would take indirect and hazardous routes to school to avoid ghosts. Similarly, in Christensen *et al*’s (2014) Danish study, references were made to mythical Figures.

Tarifa and Kloop (1996) in their study exploring childhood fears in Albania and Sweden also found that very different fears were noted as significant in these two contrasting societies. In Albania ghosts were noted as significant fears (along with criminals, animals and darkness) whereas in Sweden war, environmental problems, death and unemployment were more tangible fears noted by children. Beliefs in spirits and ghosts are also strongly embedded in cultures in South East Asia, where

many children in this study come from. Bubandt (2012) found, for example, in Indonesia belief in ghost had a significant impact on children's mobility with some parents not allowing children out at times because of fears of ghosts. The Quran also makes reference to '*jinn*' a number of times - 'Indeed We created man from dried clay of black smooth mud. And We created the Jinn before that from the smokeless flame of fire' (Quran, n.d, 15:26-27). Thus *jinn* are seen to precede the existence of humans. Belief in *jinn*, referred to as spirits, ghosts and *jinn* by the children, appears to be significant within the case. Yousef spoke animatedly during our big focus group about *jinn*:

"You know when there are *jinn* because the lights turn on and off. They live in trees... I heard of a cleaner who was taken over by a *jinn* when walking out at night in the community".

Indeed, for some of the children a belief in *jinn* impacted their use and experiences of place (similar to findings by Porter *et al* (2011)), insofar as they fear outdoor environments, including the desert outside the community, as being haunted with *jinn*. Yousef's comment above suggests it is unsafe to walk out at night in the community.



Figure 88: "I don't walk here at night because of ghosts" (Nabeel photovoice image)



Places viewed as environments potentially inhabited by *jinn* include abandoned houses, trees and rocks. It was also noted that jinn could take the form of animals such as cats, leading to some fear of cats at night. For Sari, the Indian Stream school and skate park were claimed to be haunted, although she does acknowledge these as made up stories: “sometimes for us kids... who have been here a long time.. we would make up rumours about schools or tell scary stories.. almost urban legends... someone died once on the old Dolphin Road and people have seen things there.. also the skate park, the also have a playground at the back and there’s a big net swing. My friend say’s the devil lives there and we shouldn’t go there”. Daniel talks about the cultural basis for such beliefs – “in South East Asia like Indonesia ghosts and apparitions are really common.. it’s part of the culture”.

Research into children’s belief in the supernatural has tended to be somewhat biased towards the West, with reference to belief in Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, and generally attributed to parents’ desire to preserve the innocence of childhood (Braswell *et al*, 2011). Braswell *et al* (2011) suggest that beliefs in ghosts and spirits in children is often a result of such beliefs being held by parents. Indeed, the oral cultures of many of the children (for example those from Indonesia, Pakistan, Qatar) contain many references to stories about *jinn*. While for some children the supernatural was a significant aspect of their place experience (see Figures 89 and 90), for others it was regarded as immature or babyish, and even un-Islamic, to believe in such things.

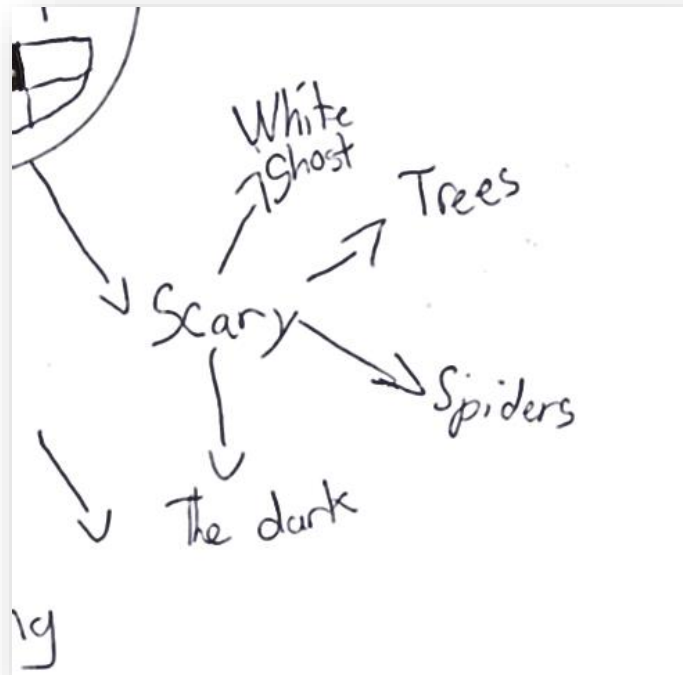


Figure 89: scary places: white ghost, trees, spiders, the dark (Mohammed)

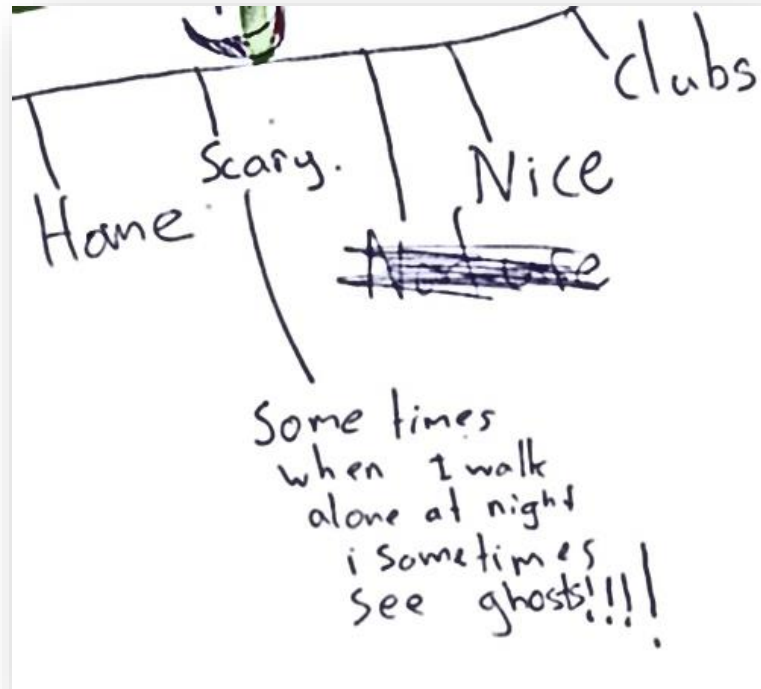


Figure 90: Fitri: "some times when I walk alone at night I sometimes see ghosts!!!!"

Connected to concepts of haunted places, it is worth noting that in the process of devising categories, a number of groups expressed ideas of good / bad places, often linked to ideas of place being haunted or having a certain 'spirit'. One group expressed these as 'places of evil' – strong language indeed (Figure 91).

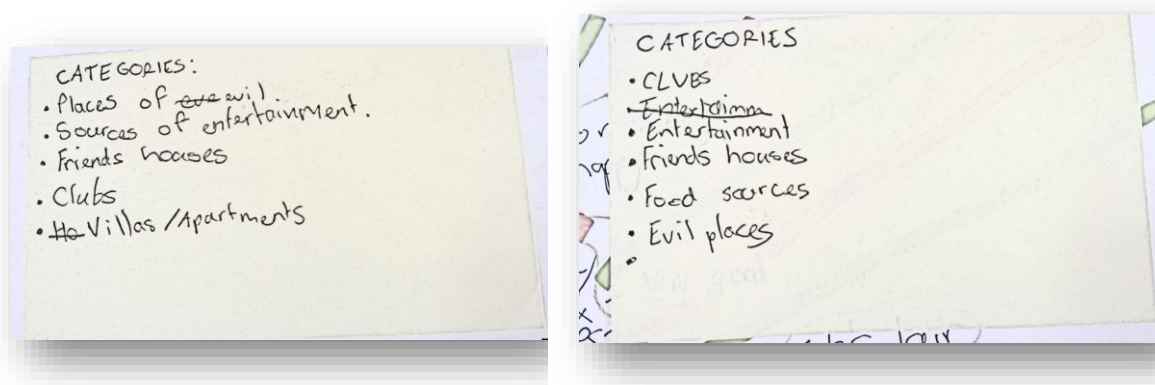


Figure 91: Places of evil as group categories in P2

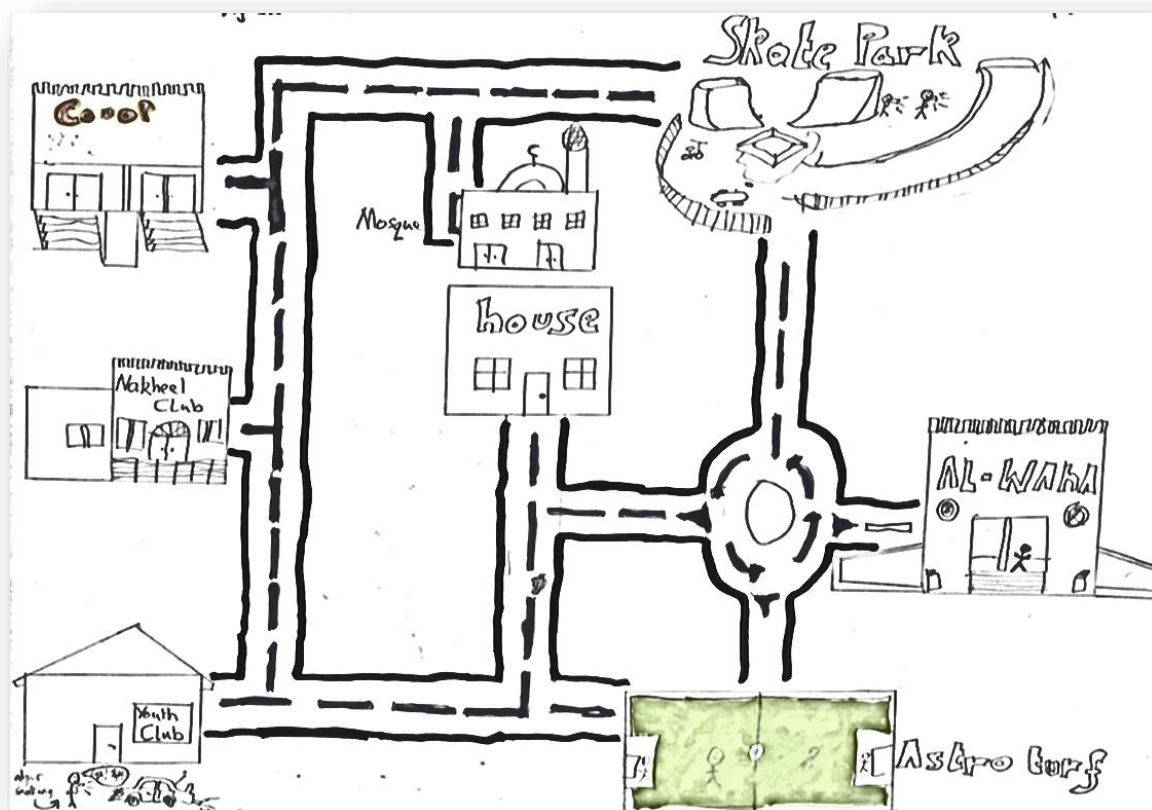
## 8.2.8 Economic places

This category emerged in both Phases, and at first examination is a straightforward category referring primarily to shops within the compound. However, a number of children also made reference to malls and other shopping areas outside of the immediate community, in Doha. Travel into the capital at the weekend was noted as an important recreational activity for the children. The complication comes from how these economic places are negotiated, less as places of consumption, but more as places of social interaction. This discussion will focus on the significance of the compound co-op as both an 'economic place', but also social site.

### 8.2.8.1 The co-op as an economic place to push social boundaries

The co-op, a small supermarket opposite the school, featured strongly as an important place for the children. It was a recurring image in the children's photographs, and was referred to extensively in concept maps, maps and during walks. Although labelled 'economic places', the *economics* of such places as sites of consumption were not noted as significant. Instead, they are emphasized as sites for socialization and a focus for what the children themselves describe as deviant ('bad')

behavior – in particular smoking. Thus the co-op in actual fact might be best situated within the category ‘Social Places and Recreation’. However, to honour the participant generated categories it will be examined here. Ayman (P2) notes on his map the key important locations for him, including the co-op (Figure 92).



*Figure 92: Ayman's significant places, including the coop.*

The significance and symbolism of the co-op goes beyond the physical structure of the shop. It is a meeting place of significance for many of the teenagers in the community. Ayman noted in a focus group “the co-op.. is like a place you can hang out.. like not inside it but around it like at the back or on the benches.. it's so funny when you see a teacher there but the securities are annoying”. He adds, “we go there because really there's no other places to go.. sometimes the older kids make us feel unsafe there or try to make us leave.. they like smoking and doing stuff like that there”. It is a space of transgression – perceived almost as ‘edgy’ by many adolescents - where a number of boundaries can be subverted, and is therefore an important place of identity formation. On walks it was noted by boys as a place where some people went to smoke. It was seen as a site of rebellion – in fact during the

time of data collection three arson incidents occurred in the co-op area (burning of cardboard boxes at the rear of the shop, leading to the building catching fire) triggering a curfew for 18s on the compound streets after 9pm. Arson by teenagers has been linked to 'abusive and abnormal family environment, painful and unsolved childhood experiences, negative environmental experiences, serious personality problems and minor neurological and medical disorders' (Lowenstein, 1989 p.186). The school also experienced several incidents of fire starting in bathrooms.

The co-op featured strongly in photovoice images frequently taken at night as shown below in Ayman's image (Figure 93).



*Figure 93: The co-op at night: a place to hang out (Ayman's photovoice image)*

The importance of neighbourhood shops as a focal point resonates with other research, for example Matthews *et al* (2000). Fundamentally we are forced to ask whether such locations are appropriate places for teenagers to 'hang out'. While the co-op within the community is arguably a gendered space, with boys being afforded more freedom to use the area independently, it is by no means devoid of girls, similar to findings of Matthews *et al* (ibid.) in the UK, where corner shops were found to be

important places of socialization for younger teenagers. Small markers of territory were left in the area by the children – graffiti most notably, a means of creating ‘microgeographies’ in the local area (Matthews *et al*, 1998). Similarly, Ayman noted how markings and scratched out notes on a bench next to the co-op were left by different groups of teenagers, with a messaging system of sorts, and a chance to communicate with the opposite sex. This imaginative use of space is not always understood or envisaged by adults.

### **8.2.9 Roads and travel**

In P1 the category ‘transport’ was created, and ‘roads’ in P2. These have been combined to form the category ‘roads and travel’. Roads, or streets, have been explored as social sites already in 9.2.2, and here the focus is on mobilities, car dependence and the impacts of this on experiences of place. It is argued that dependence on car transportation leads to mental maps where places are somewhat disconnected in space.

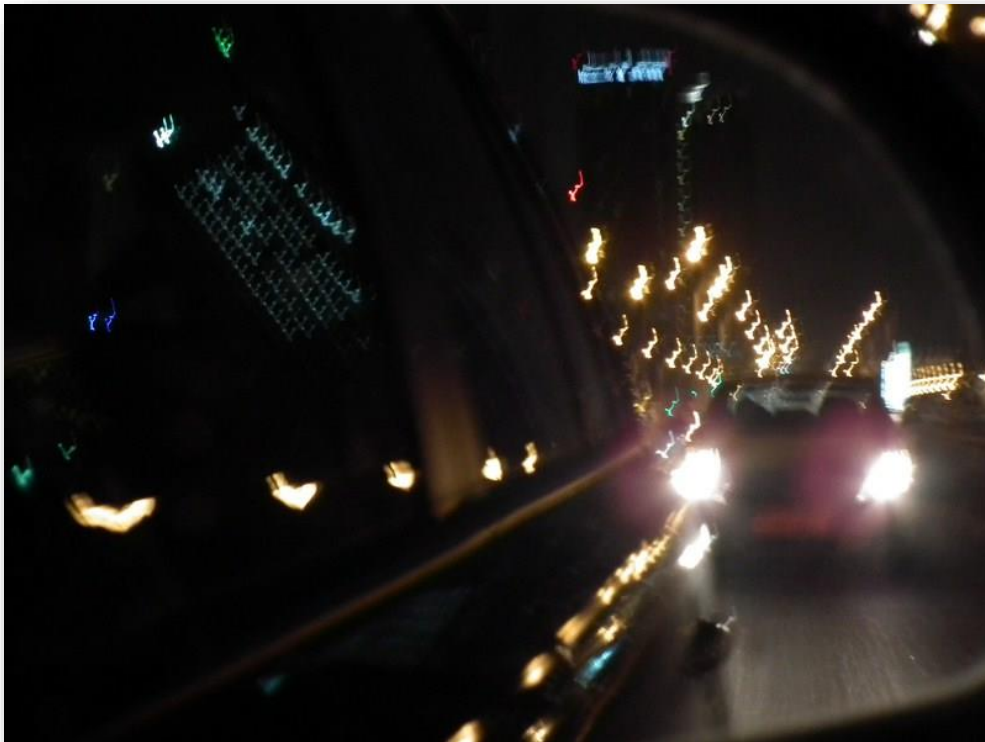
#### **8.2.9.1 Car dependence and independent mobilities**

A good starting point when considering car dependence and the impact of gatedness on sense of freedom comes from Melanie, a participant in P2. Her ideas also strongly link to the category gates and walls. Melanie eloquently noted in our P2 big focus group that:

“it wasn't until I was 12 that I knew I could walk outside the compound or even thought about it as being possible. I always thought the security guards would stop me... that you could only get in and out in a car. I see the workers come in and out on bikes or walking but I didn't think just anyone could do that”.

When asked if she had ever done this she responded “never. It's just desert out there and I'm scared of the workers on their bikes. It's not safe for girls”. More evidence for lack of walking, and dependence on cars in everyday life came from the photovoice images, many of which had been taken from cars. This resonates Malone's (2007) research in Australia. Malone (2007 p.516) writes that ‘Children are being chauffeured around their neighbourhood, often for very short distances because of the increased fear of traffic and ‘stranger’ danger’. In her own study of everyday life

for children in a small Australian town using photovoice, over half of the children submitted photos of the back of a car seat – their vantage of the world. In Figure 94 Sari takes a photo from the window of a car. A very large number of photovoice images were taken from cars, with windows obscuring the view and blurred because of movement (see Figure 95). It was clear many children had been chaffered around NQC to take photographs by parents.



*Figure 94: 'traffic isn't as bad here as in Indonesia mostly because there aren't so many motorbikes'  
Sari on the road at night (photovoice image)*





*Figure 95: ‘a park’ AJ’s (P2) photovoice image – blurred and obscured by a car window*

While fear of traffic and stranger danger may explain this reliance on cars, particularly for girls in the context of NQC, cultural factors such as cars as status symbols, a cultural preference towards automotive transport over walking / bicycling in the region, and the harsh climate of Qatar also are contributors. The geographical isolation of the community and lack of alternative transportation also necessitates use of cars. Barker (2009) has written extensively on children’s experiences of mobility and car travel. He writes of the significance of cars as sites not only of mobility, but also recreation, friendship development, homework, use of technology and consumption. Using in-depth interviews, surveys and photography, and a Foucauldian analysis of power, he also found cars to be sites of conflict and power battles between children and parents. This was especially acute since children can never have independent mobility in cars, as passengers dependent on parents. This passive position as passenger impacts their experiences of place and they travel through the local environment. The passive position of children as passengers is



important to consider in an environment dominated by car transportation, since independent mobility of children becomes challenged.

During walks with P2 students many also noted that they had never so extensively explored the local area by foot, preferring to take the bus to school and travel by car with parents. This dependency on car transportation is likely to have an impact on both children's independent mobility but also sense of place. Indeed, the prominence of roads in maps drawn is an indicator of the importance of roads / transport is further evidence of this.

#### **8.2.9.2 Roads, car transportation and a 'nodal' sense of place**

Evidence that car transportation impacts experiences of place emerged in a number of maps that revealed a somewhat disjointed mental image of place with some maps emphasising roads expressing multiple locations geographically disconnected.

Dhea's (P1) map (Figure 96) of her perceived local environment in fact comprises nine distinct maps, somewhat accurately depicting the road networks surrounding key places in her everyday life. Interested in her map I asked Dhea during analysis why she had drawn several maps in one, she responded by say they were the places she drives to in a typical week. Aizi (P1) produced a similar map (Figure 97) with six numbered locations ranging from the local (school, home, the mosque and the skate park), to more distant locations in Doha such as Landmark, Villagio and City Centre (all shopping malls). I asked Aizi if she knew where all these places were in relation to each other, which she did not, attributing this to "driving between them all the time".

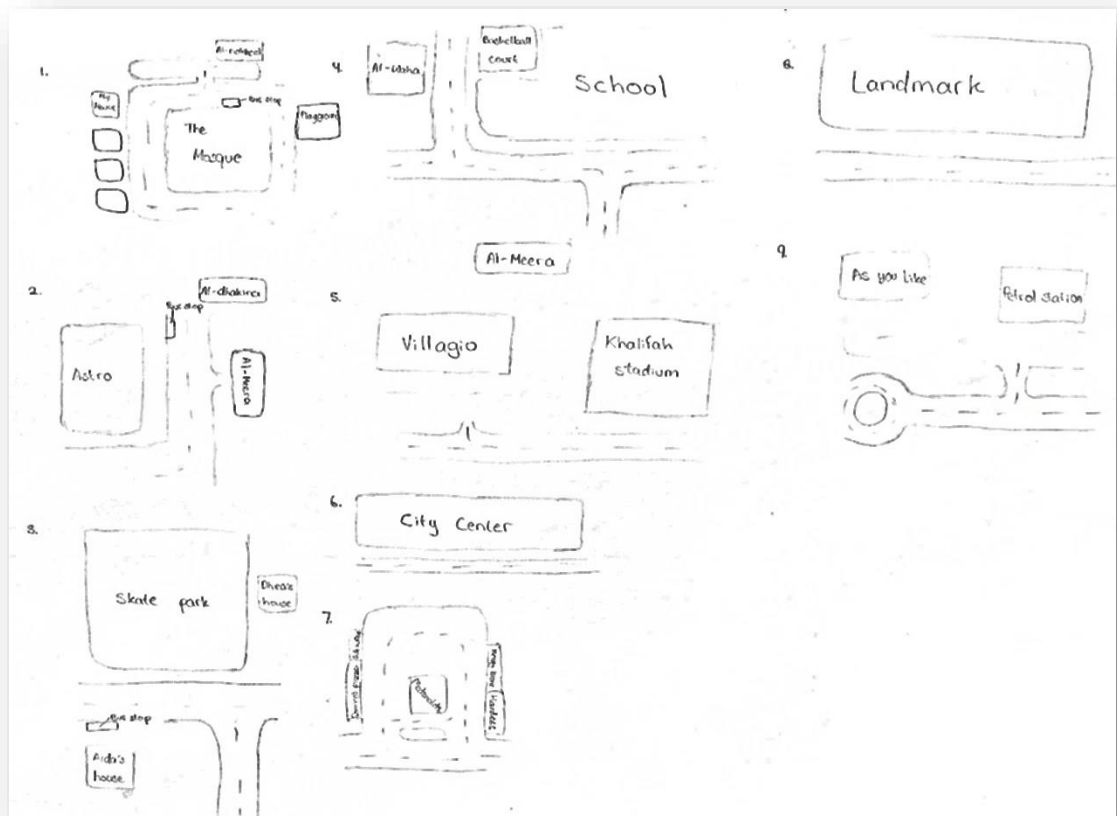


Figure 96: Dhea's multimodal map

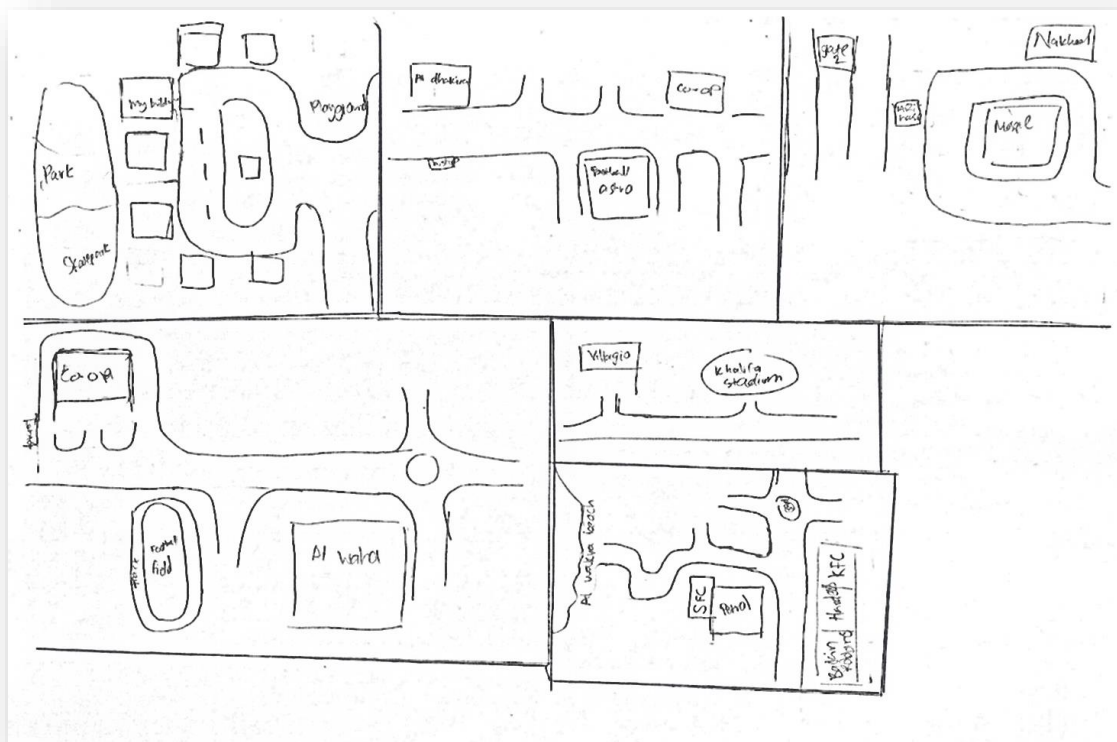


Figure 97: Aizi's significant places map – disconnected 'local' nodes

Dhea and Aizi's local area maps provide some evidence that car dependence might be influencing children's sense of place, mental maps and conceptualization of the local environment as significant nodes, disconnected in space (through passive mobility in cars), re-connected through road networks. This is a theme researched by Paskins (2005), who used landmark recognition surveys and area mapping to investigate children's place awareness, cross-referencing data with transportation methods used. The study, conducted in the UK, involved 69 children aged 8 – 11. According to Paskins, a decline in children's independent exploration on foot has an important cognitive impact on children:

'One consequence of these changes for an individual child is that he or she is probably spending less time in the local environment, with less opportunity to take part in the social and environmental interactions that can be important learning experiences. One aspect of this learning experience is building up an understanding of how the local environment is put together, and how to navigate independently within it. The mental representation of knowledge about the environment, and the spatial relationships within it'. (Paskins 2005 p 51).

In this sense, through experiencing place from the back seat of cars, children are not necessarily learning how the local environment is 'put together' as Pashins puts it, that is the spatial arrangement of places in relation to each other. This could have further implications for how children learn about new environments encountered in their future lives.

#### **8.2.10 Health**

The medical centre is a medium-sized clinic offering GP-type services to community residents. Like the school and the social clubs, it is a focal point for the community. The significance of the medical centre as a category in its own right was initially surprising, with the category 'Health' being noted in both P1 and P2, but in the context of NQC it is one of the few non-residential buildings, and is opposite the school and therefore a place the participants see on a daily basis.

In most communities, for most children, hospitals and clinics are arguably not such significant sites, although of course for children with health problems they are likely extremely significant. Hospitals are mentioned briefly by Cele (2005) in her investigation of children's local environment experiences in the UK and Sweden, with children appreciating living near services such as clinics and hospitals. The central place of the medical centre, and the resulting category of health, is because of the geographical location the medical centre opposite school, because a number of children have parents working at the clinic and of course because the children visit the clinic for appointments. The profile of the clinic is raised by their community involvement in health campaigns, some focused at the school, relating to issues such as smoking, weight-loss, diabetes awareness and interestingly the community problem of many children not having enough sun exposure (due to clothing and avoiding being outside) leading to lack of vitamin D. During health scares such as flu outbreaks the clinic also raises its profile within the school. Interestingly the children did not appear to associate locations like gyms within the category 'health', instead viewing health more in terms of cure than prevention or wellness.

For Lala it is highlighted as a significant place, featuring prominently in her data (for example Figure 98).



Figure 98: Lala's significant places: medical centre

It also features in her concept map (Figure 99), along with home, school, the clubs and the skate park.



*Figure 99: the importance of the medical centre for Lala.*

### 8.2.11 School and education

The importance of NQIS as a site for the children cannot be overstated, almost universally appearing in all data sets. In P1 this was articulated simply as the category 'school', whereas in P2 the term 'education' was used. School was represented positively and negatively, sometimes by the same children, eliciting a variety of emotions. Studies exploring student perceptions and experiences of international schools are limited. Broadening the category to 'school and education' acknowledges significant places and educational settings beyond the school, in particular Dar Al Arqam, a *madrassa* attended by many Muslim students for Islamic education and Quran reading.

#### 8.2.11.1 Multiple meanings, functions and experiences of school

Five key affordances and experiences of school are highlighted in data: school as a physical site (the building, architecture), emotional responses to school, school as a site of learning, school as a place of boredom and school as a space for socialising. Figure 100 is a photovoice image from Manahil which she described as summing up school: “school is important, but we hate it! You can’t get out”.



*Figure 100: “school is important but we hate it! You can’t get out!”: Manahil (photovoice image)*

In terms of the importance of school as a category of the children’s place experience key ideas are summarised in Table 26.

Importance	Summary	Evidence	Significance to study
<b>School as significant physical site.</b>	School is considered a central place in the community – a focus for young people. School as the geographical centre of the community.	Prominent place of school in maps.	School is a focal point in terms of the children's environmental experience. Place experience tends to be based around a triad of home – school – recreation sites.
<b>Diversity of emotional experiences of school</b>	School is experienced by different children in different ways, eliciting both positive and negative emotions.	Evidence in concept maps.	In terms of generalizing about children's experiences of place (and school as a part of this) these must be tentative. Different children can have positive and / or negative affordances of school and place.
<b>School as site of learning</b>	School is valued as a place to learn and gain skills.	Concept maps referring to learning, developing skills in school.	School is valued by many of the students; some feel privileged to go to the school; some make comparisons to education in home countries.
<b>School as boring</b>	Boredom is central to many children's sense of place in NQC (like in Christensen & James' 2000 study). This is linked primarily to two factors: boredom at school and boredom as a result of surveillance and security. Sense of school as a factory (Aitken, 1994)	Evidence in concept maps; focus groups.	Boredom is noted as a generalized problem in NQC, as well as specifically in school. The community needs to recognize such high reported levels of teenage boredom is a social problem.
<b>School as an important social site</b>	School, particularly times before and after school and breaks, is an important time to socialize (see Blatchford, 1998; Malone & Tranter, 2003). Also some ideas of school being a hard place to 'fit in', as also found in Maden (1999) and Stevens (2010).	Evidence in concept maps, interviews and from comments in data analysis sessions.	Highlights importance of school grounds; facilitating opportunities for children to spend time outside together.

*Table 26: summary of the importance of school as a category of place experience*

Therefore, it is proposed that further investigation into how international school students in different contexts experience the school environment is needed. For globally mobile children, school is often the first point of contact with a new residential location, and thus a key aspect of their lives and every day experiences.



### 8.2.11.2 Educational beyond school: Dar Al Arqam

Dar Al Arqam is an Islamic school catering to Muslim students in NQC. It is attended before / after school and at weekends, offering Quran reading, competitions and fieldtrips (see Figure 101). It is also a place to socialise for some children, in particular Indonesian females who sometimes noted it as a safer space than parks and the Youth Club, accepted by parents as a 'good' place to be. In the moral landscape of NQC, Dar Al Arqam and the mosques are arguably the most 'pure' spaces for many residents, and therefore appropriate places for children to be.

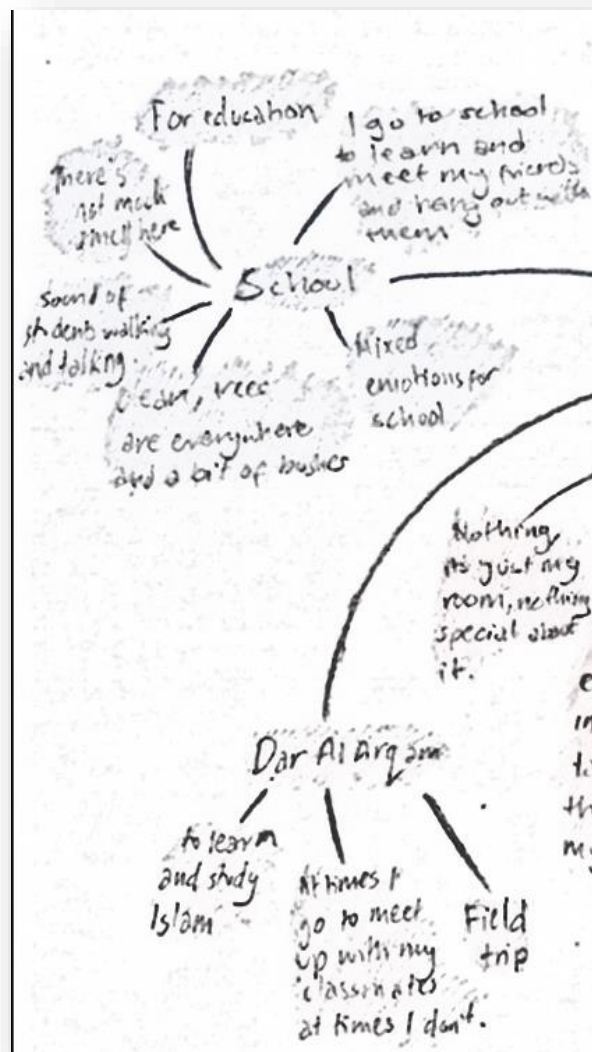


Figure 101: Dar Al Arqam in Sari's concept map



For Farid, Dar Al Arqam represents a cultural space for Indonesians (Figure 102):



*Figure 102: Cultural space of Dar Al Arqam for Indonesians (Farid P1 concept map)*

In the multicultural context of Mauritius, Owodally (2011) examines from a sociolinguistic and post-structuralist perspective the significance of madrasas for Muslim children. His findings are of interest to this study. In his case study Owodally found that the *madrasa*, a site similar to Dar Al Arqam, was a place for Muslim children in a multifaith and multicultural community to develop their social identities. He describes how children employ ‘compartmentalising strategies’ which are inherently spatial, emphasising certain aspects of identity in certain places (for example use of different languages in different settings), de-emphasising them in others. In Owodally’s study children de-emphasised their ‘Muslim-ness’ at school, instead expressing it more at the madrasa. This is a coping strategy for managing multiple identities which may be conflicting. Similar strategies were alluded to in this study, particularly by Indonesian students, Dar Al Arqam being a place to perform ‘Indonesian-ness’, de-emphasising this in the more cosmopolitan and international context of school. Of course the madrasa in NQC is a multicultural space not for exclusive use by Indonesian residents, but it does appear to be most used by this community. Unsurprisingly for non-Muslim participants Dar Al Arqam did not feature as a significant site, highlighting how place experience and local environment perception is in part influenced by cultural and religious background.

### 8.2.11.3 The Indian Stream

Few children noted the sister Indian school in the community. As previously explained, NQIS is split into two 'streams' – English National Curriculum (site of this study) and Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum. They are separate entities – in terms of administration and school buildings. Where the school was noted by children in this study, it tended to be in somewhat negative terms, or as an insignificant site for them. For Irfan, it is simply noted as one of the 'places I don't go' along with the beauty salon:



Figure 103: Irfan – 'places I don't go'

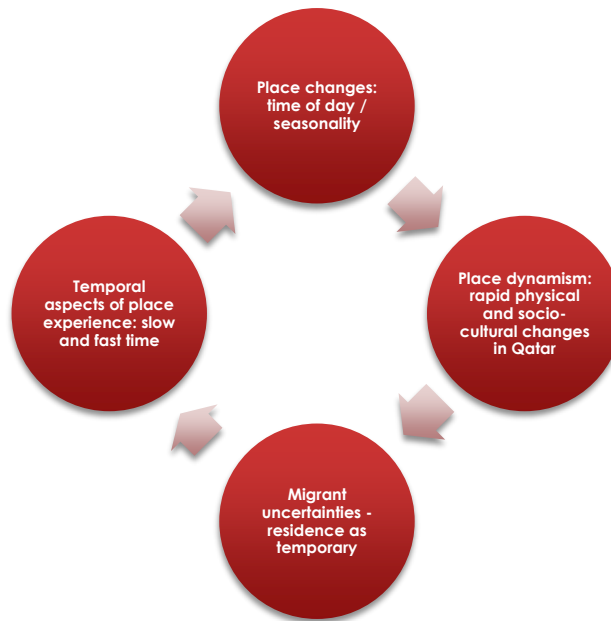
### 8.2.12 Time

*If time unfolds as change, space unfolds as interaction (Massey, 2005).*

It became apparent in this research that the temporal dimension of place experience also needs consideration, exploring how space and time are co-implicated – 'on the side of space, there is the integral temporality of a dynamic simultaneity. On the side of time, there is the necessary production of change through practices of interrelation' (Massey 2005 p 55). Such thinking is similar to Ingold's (2007) wayfaring where movement and perception is key to the process of 'placemaking' (p.101).

In P2, 'time' was noted as a category of place experience primarily with reference to place changes at different times of day, specifically that the area took on a different

character at night and became a 'different place'. However, I have expanded this participant developed category to include four important temporal dimensions to place experience illustrated in Figure 104.



*Figure 104: four interrelated aspects of time as category of place experience*

An implication here is that, if place experience is so temporally variable, data collected about place experience should be understood as such. Place and the local environment here has been presented as a process, constantly changing in subtle and less subtle ways, and therefore experiences of it should also be considered *process*, and thus variable, in flux and influenced by the global and local. This means uncertainty is inevitable.

#### **8.2.12.1 Time of day and seasonal changes in place experience**

The significance of time for children is not unique to this study. Christensen *et al/s* (2015) study of children's place experiences in Denmark also found time to be a key aspect their experiences. Also drawing inspiration from Massey's concept of place as process they note:

'Certain places are consistently avoided while other places are used differently in the daytime and the evening. Hence, places change significance during the course of the day as well as with time, in

accordance with Massey's theoretical concept of place as process. For example, places of violence differ in time and can change the children's perceptions of a place from one day to the other. While such a change may happen overnight it is likely to affect the status of a location for a long time to come'. (p 8).

During focus groups it was clear that many of the children felt that the community became a different place at night. Night-time is associated with both freedom, and fear, relevant to the category 'Safe Places and Security'. While some noted the evening and nights as times of freedom, others felt the daytime offered freedom and autonomy. With reference to the latter, Ikhsan (Figure 105) notes some interesting features of day and night for him:

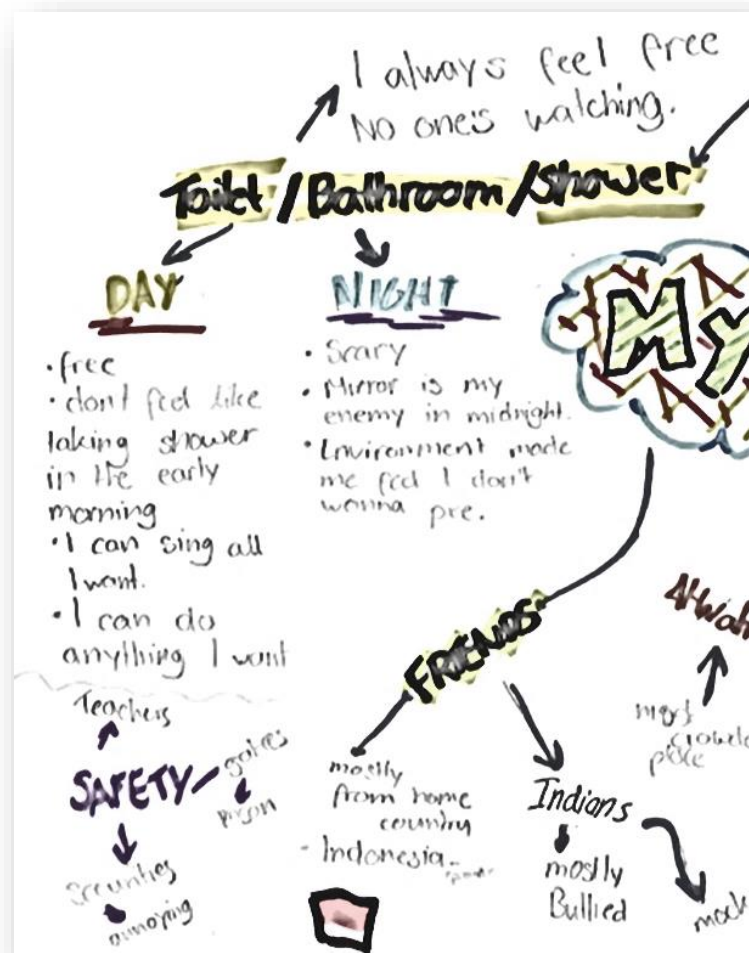


Figure 105: Ikhsan on the differences between day and night

Conversely, in our big focus group Saad spoke about night time affording more freedoms, especially at the weekend:

“At night we can explore the community [NQC] and hide from securities [sic]... We meet friends and chill without people telling us what to do... Some people even have older friends with cars so we can drive around when it's too hot to walk”. (Saad, P1 big focus group).

Spending time outside was very much gendered, with few girls in P1 or P2 saying they spent time after dark outside the home, unless with parents or for special occasions, like during Ramadan. Ramadan was mentioned as a time when temporal norms of use of space shifted, with much more freedom to be out at night afforded during this month for children, often centred around *iftar* meals with friends to break the fast.

#### **8.2.12.2 Place dynamism: time unfolding as change and the process of place**

The children are acutely aware of the rapid pace of change in Qatar, in economic, socio-cultural and physical spheres. During a focus group with P1 students our discussion shifted to explore change in the local area and change in Qatar more generally. A key aspect of children's perceptions of these changes was a sense of pride in the achievements of Qatar. This was succinctly articulated by Daniel (P1 small focus group): “Most of our parents came here to work and they are helping to change the country. Like the Asian Games and all the changes in Doha we are a part of that.”

Change was also noted in the local area in terms of compound development. Participants were excited by the expansion of the community, and the potential for change because of this. Qatar's award of the 2022 World Cup was frequently mentioned. Children were proud that the event would be in Qatar, but concerned about the impacts of the rapid changes it would bring in terms of construction on the environment and population growth. This sense of being proud of the rapid change in Qatar, and modernity of the built environment, was sometimes in contrast with home countries.

In terms of the local community, rapid development was also noted in NQC. Sari took a number of photographs of construction within the GC commenting on the negative externalities of change – noise, dust and construction workers (Figure 106). Change

within NQC was considered positively with some excitement about the expansion of NQC and influx of new people.



*Figure 106: "Construction view from my bedroom its always changing here" (Sari, photovoice image P1)*

Sumaia in Figure 107 nicely highlights some of the key feelings towards change in the community as shown in Sari's photograph, referring to both the physical environment and socio-demographic changes.

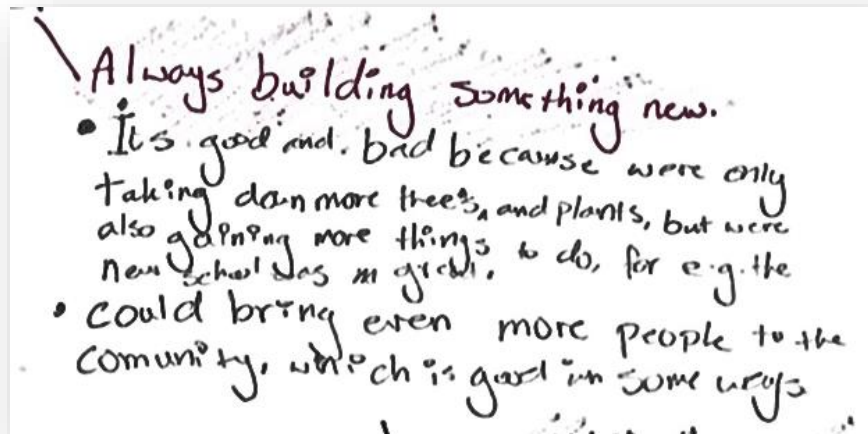


Figure 107: Sumaia and change in the community (concept map P2).

Change was not always viewed positively, particularly by children resident in NQC for long periods of time, some for most of their lives. Sari, for example, reminisced about the past and how growth and change has not always been good: “I remember when this place was all empty and stuff, like.. umm.. peaceful”.

#### 8.2.12.3 Experiences of time: time perception and place

Wittmann (2016) explores subjective of experiences of the passing of time. He highlights how experiences of time, and subjectivities therein, impacts a wide range of experiences, including sense of self and memory. Like Heidegger, Wittmann associates time and self. Time perception is a sprawling field of study, in neuroscience and psychology. Aspects of time experience is touched upon in education studies and critical geography, and temporality has been explored in this study as a key aspect of my conceptualization of space and place, conceived as *process* (Massey, 1998), where time unfolds as change, and space unfolds as interaction (Massey, 2005).

One of the most interesting comments made during data analysis was by Yousef who stated that “time goes more slowly here”. When questioned about this he elaborated saying that when in NQC “time goes more slowly here [in NQC].. in other places it goes quicker like in Doha or back in Jordan”. Many other children agreed, claiming that when in NQC time passed slowly, but when outside NQC it passed quickly. While it can be speculated that children may experience and perceive time in different ways depending on location, it is more likely to be linked to emotion and

activity at the time rather than place *per se*. Indeed, we are all aware of the *sense* of time dragging when bored and studies suggest that children do experience time more slowly when not engaged in enjoyable or meaningful activities (Droit-Volet, 2011). Here, unfortunately, Yousef may be equating life in NQC with boredom and lack of stimulation.

#### 8.2.12.4 Migrant uncertainties

A final aspect of temporal experiences of place, arguably unique or at least more acute for international school students, is acknowledgement of the temporary nature of their stay in the country. A sense of imminent possible 'movings on' was noted by children – not in visual data – but verbally. This idea was first raised in the P1 small focus group by Fauzan:

“We all.. well us who aren't Qatari.. know we won't be here forever. I know I'll go back to Indo [Indonesia] for uni or maybe even before. After that I think I will leave again maybe somewhere like Dubai. My Dad wants me to try and get a job here but I don't know”

The parents of the children in this study often work on annual contracts, and children are acutely aware of contract renewal time. There is an understanding that their residence is temporary, and dependent on parental employment. The implications of uncertainty here are likely multifold, in particular in terms of relationships and identity. A number of researchers have developed stages of TCKs experiences of mobility, for example Pollock and Van Reken's (2011) five stages of transition of involvement, leaving, transition, entering, and reinvolverment or Limberg and Lambie's (2011) three stages of transition, entering and leaving. Each of these stages is bound up in uncertainties, and these narratives of 'temporariness' and mobility are also felt by adults. Writing about migrants in Qatar from a range of backgrounds, Scurry *et al* (2013) associate this with a tendency to feel a sense of detachment from place.

It can be speculated that children may have similar experiences, and children are certainly part of family conversations about mobility at home in TCK contexts, with varying degrees of voice and agency in decisions to move. As Hayden (2006) notes, from an educational perspective, the key question is what can schools do to support students in their transitions, mobilities and uncertainties? Langford's (1998) research into TCK transitions found that the most successful strategies international schools



implemented involved two key elements – orientation upon arrival in new schools and acknowledgement of the unique needs of globally mobile children in the philosophy and objectives of schools. Offering a curriculum that is appropriate to internationally mobile children is also important, and place-conscious curricula may well be helpful here (explored further in Chapter 10). In terms of managing the kinds of temporal and mobile uncertainties voiced by children in this study, it can be hard for teachers and schools to know family circumstances in terms of mobility, but schools, and in particular school counsellors, can help parents to manage mobility, uncertainty and change.

### 8.2.13 Online world

Contemporary explorations of children's experiences of space and place cannot ignore the importance of online spaces, and how children mediate the physical world whilst being digitally connected online. Here, the online or virtual is not considered separate from the physical. Virtual and physical spaces of childhood are experienced *simultaneously*, therefore suggesting the binary of online / offline may be unhelpful. Gajjala (2012 p.12) conceives online and offline as 'interweaved', where the internet 'in/as everyday life', critiquing the binary of 'real' / 'virtual'. Similarly, Rooney (2012) describes physical-virtual worlds, emphasising the intertwined nature of these two 'spaces'. Lemos (2008 p.103) writes with reference to cyberspaces that

'It is not cyberspace, or the "virtual" versus the "real", but the social production of space (and place and territories) with mobile technologies and networks. It is all about physical places, real objects, and real people. These examples can be seen as a new research field, crossing geographical, sociological, communicational, urban, design, and informational boundaries'.

Therefore, online practices of children need to be contextualised, or emplaced, within 'real' spaces of childhood. The importance of online interactions in how the participants in this study understand and experience their local environment emerged in focus groups and concept maps, and to an extent in walks, where many of the children were relaying the experience back to friends in class at school through phone messaging.

As a non-physical space, albeit one materially bound by digital devices and experienced in physical places (Massey, 2005), the online world was largely absent from maps which were dominated by tangible and mappable space. However, the 'virtual' was strongly associated, in concept maps primarily, with certain physical spaces such as homes, in particular bedrooms, and bus stops as sites connected to the 'outside' through computers, phones and tablets. For Ikhsan, the internet is considered a *place* to spend time (Figure 108).

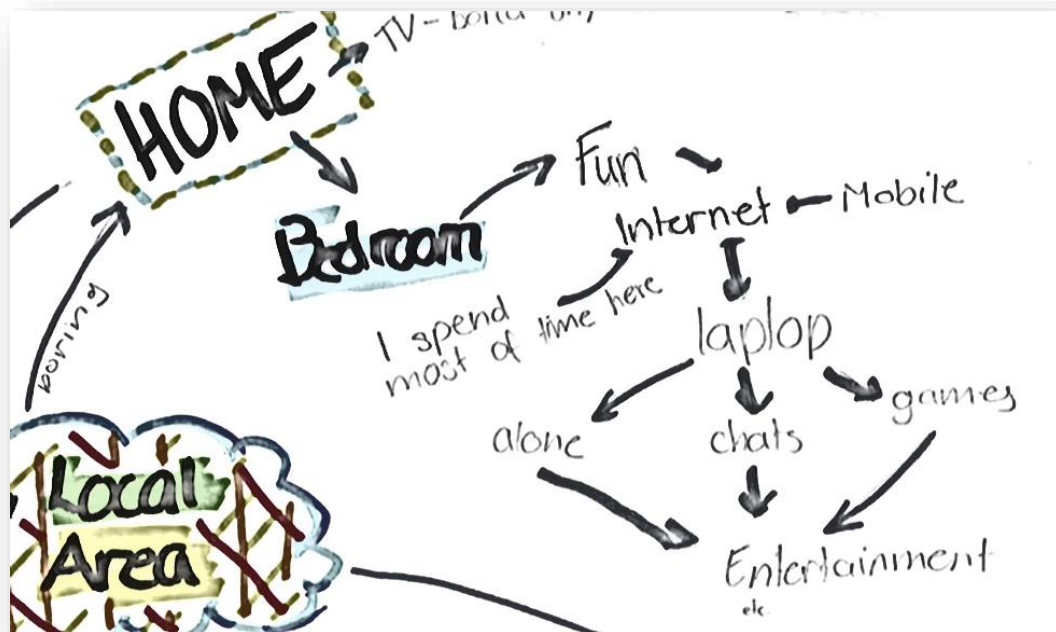


Figure 108: Internet as a place: Ikhsan

Interested in Ikhsan's apparent understanding of the internet as a place articulated in his concept map, I verified this, with him, not sure if the connection of 'I spend most of my time here' was referring to 'bedroom' or 'internet'. He confirmed it was the latter, as in his concept map, describing the internet as a place because "you can meet people there and chat and play games just like a real place".

Studies exploring how children use online social networking (OSN), and specifically how TCKs use OSNs, is emerging. OSNs are defined by Laudone (2012 p 10) as networks where 'Individuals construct identity and interactions in a virtual space, simulating direct, interpersonal relationships via virtual interactivity'. This would therefore include Facebook, Skype and Twitter. Collett's (2014) phenomenological

study of how TCKs use OSNs is particularly useful in conceptualizing how and why OSNs are so important for children living transnational lives, such as those in this study. His small-scale study of nine students from Grades 9-11 in an international school in the Philippines highlights a number of key themes in how children in international schools may use OSNs. He identifies seven key themes of usage by TCKs: appreciation, belonging, camaraderie, culture, label, organization and transition. Of particular interest is how OSNs are linked to feelings of belonging by TCKs, where OSNs provide 'an avenue of attachment between them and their friends locally and overseas.. Responses showed that OSN allowed for an ongoing friendship to occur where communication continued online between them and the friends they had left or who left them. The respondents said this attachment makes them happier as they are not cut off from their previous lives' (ibid. p.74-75). In this sense, the internet, and OSNs in particular, does act like a space of communication and sociability detached from physical space- a place to maintain contact with important people, near and distant.

As a study of children's experiences of their local environment, that the children in this study consider the online world a part of local place is itself interesting, as is the geography of their use of technology. While use of the internet was primarily referred to with reference to home and bedrooms, the importance of being online and connected when 'outside' was also noted, that is the physical and grounded location of use of the internet / OSNs. Siti, and her friend, Angie, noted the importance of waiting at the bus stop as a time to go online and catch up with friends using OSNs. Figure 109 is one of Siti's photovoice images showing where she and her friends spend time online chatting through Skype, messaging and playing online games.



*Figure 109: Siti and Angie: “Facebook-ing’ and gaming at the bus stop’ (photovoice image)*

I have referred to the concept of non-places in this research, and it is also possible to consider the importance of ‘non-times’ of place. Caron and Caronia (2007) explore the use of mobile technology by teenagers and reflect on the importance of teenagers using mobile devices connected to the internet in ‘no-when times and in nowhere places’ (p.38). These are times of transition in places of transition – waiting at the bus stop a good example of such a time-place. For Caron and Caronia (2007), ‘techno-objects’ are extremely important in creating everyday life, in what they term ‘nowhere places’. Drawing upon Augé’s concept of non-places. They write:

‘it concerns the signification that is attributed to nowhere places.. and no-when times. Nowhere places are crossing places devoid of any social or idiosyncratic significance, places that seem to exist only to be passed through and allow the individual to get to a more significant “where” (Caron and Caronia, 2007 p.38).

Thus ‘techno-objects’, in particular mobile phones, and interactions online with friends give these non-times and non-places meaning. For Siti, it is speculated that the site of bus stops becomes meaningful through the interactions she has with

people primarily *online* in that place. Thus the bus stop is a quasi-physical-non-physical site for her. The bus stop gains the function of being a place to catch up with gossip and maintain social relationships with other people and therefore confirming belonging within the community. Caron and Caronia (2007 p.39) go on to write that:

‘the mobile phone has given sense to these meaningless times and places, transforming them into social situations dedicated to the construction and the empowerment of interpersonal relationships. Dedicated to a social activity, they are not identified moments [and places] and meaningful situations: times and places where teenagers tell each other that they are there, where they confirm the validity of their friendship contract.. and that they are allowed to seek each other out’.

Therefore, Caron and Caronia are claiming that mobile phones have given meaning and sense to ‘meaningless times and places’.

The importance of Facebook is also highlighted in her concept map (Figure 110 – see also Figure 111). For many of the participants the use of OSNs like Facebook was noted as important in their interactions with friends, both near and distant. Many spoke about various Skype chat groups they took part in, with some spending a significant amount of time after school at home chatting with friends remotely. The use of Skype communication as a means of sexual experimentation was also alluded to by some participants, but was not a theme in other data, nor one explored in any further detail.



Figure 110: Siti's concept map: Facebook-ing and "our" bus stop

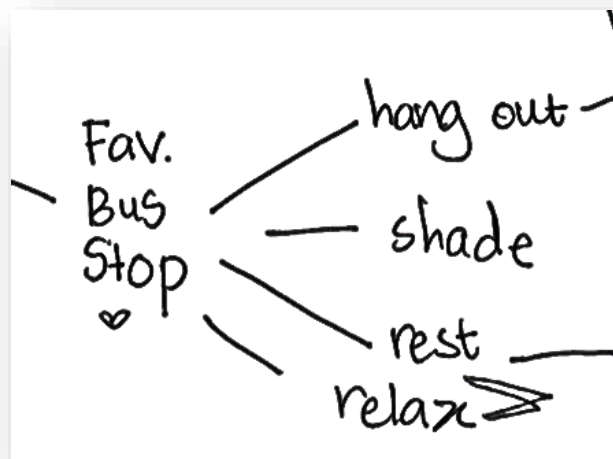


Figure 111: Angie and her 'fav. bus stop'

Collett (2014 p.iv) notes that TCKs use OSNs in similar ways to children living less transnational and mobile lives. However, he notes that:

‘The TCK construct provides an extended version of the use of OSN whereby it relies on it rather than uses it as a supplement in order to keep contact with people across the globe. In the school environment, communication between friends is the predominance of OSN’s use; however, for TCKs it also plays the function of being a recording of their social histories. Due to often-abrupt transitions, social history is important to the TCKs as it records their cultural background and ties beyond their present circumstance. This is important especially for TCKs who have been in their present circumstance a short while’.

Therefore, according to Collett, the use of OSNs for TCKs allows them to organise their multilocal lives. He also describes the use of such networks as a means of preserving personal histories and ‘heritage’, something particularly important during transitions between places, allowing the maintenance of senses of belonging. However, other researchers, like Kupfer (2007), are more critical of how use of digital devices may impact experiences of place, linking it to placelessness and further privatising of space. Kupfer believes that through use of devices like mobile phones, people disconnect themselves from place and people, and become somewhat oblivious to their surroundings. With such understandings of the impact of use of mobile phones and other ICT, Siti’s Facebook-ing at the bus stop is framed differently, where public space (like a bus stop) is privatised and internalised through use of technology and in doing so, according to Kupfer, makes it no longer a public space.

### **8.3 Summary and conclusions**

Chapter 9 has explored each of the thirteen categories of local environment / place experience identified by the children in the study. The biggest challenge has been deciding under which category to nest some aspects of place experience. This is less a reflection of some kind of inherent ‘problem’ with the categories themselves, but because of heterogeneity in meanings attached to these, and heterogeneity in how children use space and place. Challenges in understanding and theorising experiences within these categories therefore emerge where:

1. children's use and experiences of space and place deviates from widely held *adult* (researcher) understandings of function and purpose of place – this is negated in part through co-analysis and verification.
2. where there is heterogeneity of use / 'matterings' for different children – here place is understood as contested and negotiated, and therefore meanings and significances are different for different children causing problems in presenting data holistically.
3. where places are used flexibly for different purposes and with different meanings or 'matterings' at different times – connected to concepts of place as process, shifting and changing over time.

All these together create uncertainty, but uncertainty that is inherent in my understanding of place and place experience as negotiated and as process. This uncertainty does not necessarily threaten findings or the participant generated categories, but certainly complicates them. With reference to uncertainty in qualitative research, O'Toole (2010, p.129) writes 'A recognition of the ubiquitous nature of uncertainty calls on the researcher to grapple with the uncertainty, to understand the limits of knowledge and to construct part of the framework of knowledge that stands until something stronger comes along. In qualitative research, our methods for dealing with uncertainty lie in the richness, the detail and the depth of our explanations and the wisdom to accept our fallibility'. To give an example of how places are negotiated, the co-op is defined as an 'economic place' - a place of consumption - but primarily experienced and described as place of socialisation. Similarly, streets and roads are part of 'Roads and Travel', but are also experienced and used often as places for socialising. These complexities of nesting uses and experiences of place within categories thus emerges in how children subvert the controlling influences of adults over space and are part of the process of the social construction of space. The processes of conceiving and perceiving space are therefore different for children than adults (Hackett *et al*, 2015). This raises an important methodological and epistemological issue that two or more participants may agree that a category, theme or place is *significant*, but disagree on the reasons *why*. This adds a dimension of uncertainty to the categories and data, serving as a reminder of the heterogeneity of experiences children have of place. Hackett *et al* (2015 p.5) write about how for children 'spaces, and the meanings they evoke, 'matter' ... these matterings and their felt intensities may be different in comparison to adult experiences and perceptions of space', but we need to take this further to



acknowledge that they matter in different ways and to different intensities for different children.

The implications here are significant insofar as when place experience is viewed as uncertain, as a process, as in flux, any rigid categories or codes to try to encapsulate it are going to be continually challenged, in the same way negotiation of place challenges meanings and use of it. It is here that bigger and more encompassing analytical concepts perhaps have more potential to resonate place experience in a more universal sense. For example, Christensen *et al* (2015) used the relational nature of place as an etic framework for analysis itself: place as process, place as unbounded, and place as negotiated (p.594). A framework like this (see Table 27), with inbuilt flexibility, inherently acknowledges and naturally adapts to some of the challenges experienced with the categories developed by participants in this study, most of which were grounded in the physicality of the environment, which will always be perceived, experienced and negotiated in a multitude of different ways. Christensen *et al* describe the analytical process as one that ‘relies on a process of comparing the children’s statements with the aspects that comprise a relational approach to understanding space in an iterative process of reading the data and theory’ (ibid). In light of this, I have tried to link together the participant categories of place in this study, to their three guiding concepts.

Guiding element of place experience	Explanation from Christensen <i>et al</i> (2015, p.591-2)	How it relates to participant categories in this study
<b>Place as process</b>	Where place is ‘made up of the social constellations (local as well as global) that unfold at a given location at a given time, which entails that places do not hold stable identities; rather, they are continuously reconstructed through the social processes that intertwine in a given location’	Most connected to category of Time which is grounded in an understanding of place as process.
<b>Place as unbounded</b>	‘refers to the theoretical argument that no place is contained within itself; that social connections with other places are always at play and influencing any locality’	Articulated in categories like ‘homes’ and ‘safe places’.
<b>Place as negotiated</b>	Where ‘no place is contained within itself; that social connections with other places are always at play and influencing any locality... Together, these social processes and negotiations, which happen at a local as well as global scale, create the uniqueness of a place’	Almost all categories are in some way negotiated and therefore contested. Particularly contested categories include ‘Social places’ and ‘Gates and Walls’.

*Table 27: contextualising participant categories of place experience within a relational understanding of place*

# Chapter 10: Key findings and discussion

This chapter discusses key findings of this research, with findings put forward as propositions for the case rather than findings statements to emphasise their ‘fuzziness’, in Bassey’s (1999) terms. These synthesize some of the more significant outcomes of the study explored in Chapter 9, with potential applicability in other contexts.

Five key findings, all with school-specific implications, are identified and summarised in this chapter. These are developed and distilled from chapter 9, researcher theorized through juxtaposing findings with theory and literature. Table 28 summarises the linkages between my findings and data presented in Chapter 9. Findings, implications and propositions in this chapter and the next theorize *with* and *beyond* the data generated in the study, and are therefore put forward more tentatively than the categories of place experience in chapter 9. However, emphasis is on theorisation *with*, rather than *beyond*. These findings are therefore firmly based on participant generated evidence, as well as my own interpretive meanings given to data (Mason, 2002).

Findings proposition	Evidence from Chapter 9
<b>Gatedness impacts children’s experiences of local environments</b>	Concept maps, photovoice images, and discussions frequently noted gatedness, ‘place as prison’, the everyday impacts of surveillance and security patrols in reducing freedoms. Maps generally limited to confines of NQC. Those resident outside NQC had more diverse concepts of ‘local’.
<b>Binaries matter</b>	‘Real’ / ‘imagined’ worlds on maps; oppositional understandings of ‘us’ and ‘them’ with reference to Indian Stream students and non-resident workers (othering), territories on maps.
<b>Borders and boundaries lead to transgressions</b>	Use of wastelands, significance of special and hidden places for children – both individual and collective use. Creation of microgeographies, and challenging of power, through changing place (graffiti, fires). Making alternative uses out of spaces designed <i>for children by adults</i> – appropriation of space and subversive use of places.
<b>Othering needs challenging</b>	Strongly linked to binaries of place. Evidence of xenophobic attitudes arising in data, particularly against Indian community and of migrant others. Related to wider issue of cultural conflict in international communities, and international schools – how to foster cosmopolitanism (see Hayden, 2012).
<b>Children’s place experience is inherently temporal</b>	Experience and sense of place being time-dependent – places changing at night to become something different (often scary). Notions of time being experienced differently in different places (slow time vs. fast time). Change and continuity in the community – acknowledging the changing landscape both in physical and human terms.

Table 28: findings summary with links to analysis

## 9.1 Gatedness and children's experiences of place

With reference to RQ 1 (how do children living within a gated expatriate community in Qatar and attending a British international school experience their local environment?) this research asserts that gatedness in NQC has profound impacts on children's experiences and constructions of their local environment, with wider socio-emotional implications that require further research. The key aspects of a gated sense of place are concepts of 'place as prison' and territorialisation within NQC. While the children in this study are primarily referring to physical gatedness leading to a sense of being in a 'prison', I also ask myself if cultural isolation experienced by some TCKs could lead to similar feelings? This finding is closely linked and foundational to subsequent findings concerning binaries of place, boundaries and transgression of these. In the simplest terms the research highlights that living in a gated expatriate community *does* impact experiences of place, in ways that children living in less gated contexts perhaps might not experience. Key ideas are summarised in Figure 112, structured around challenges and opportunities.

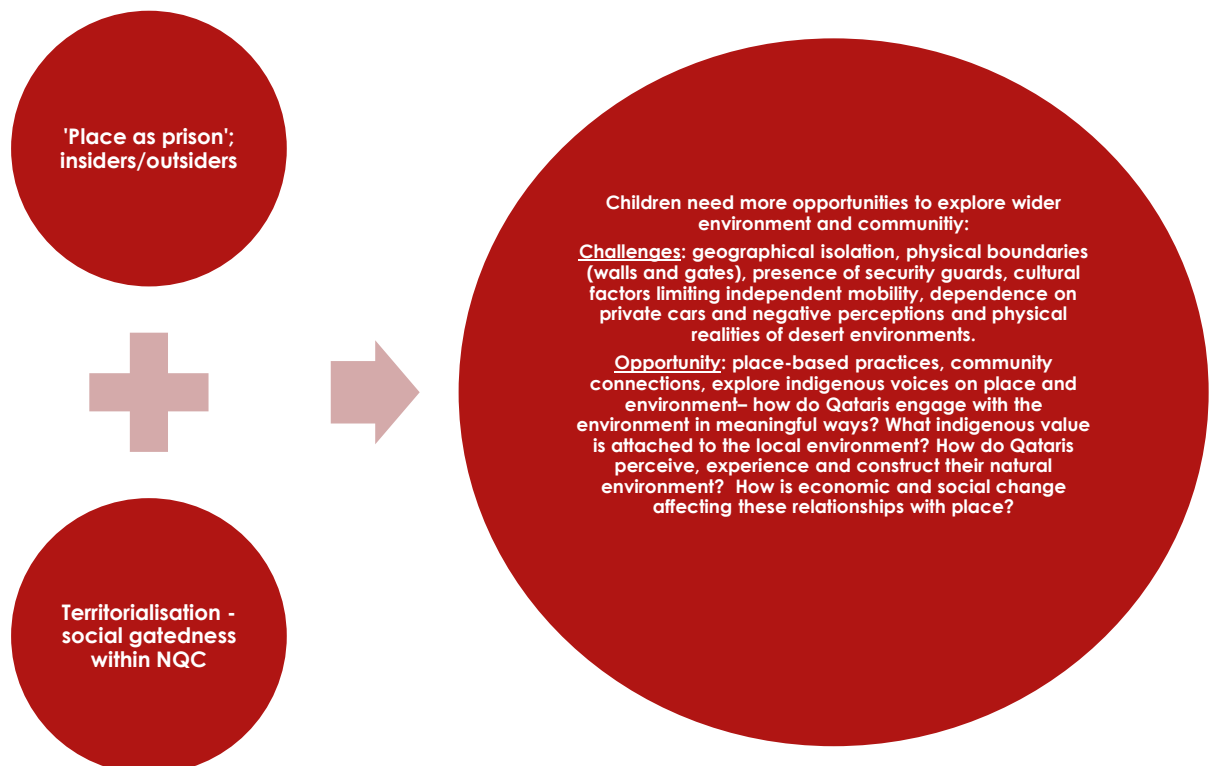


Figure 112: Gatedness and place experience in NQC

## 9.2 *Binaries matter*

Linked strongly to the discussion in 10.1, it is proposed that the context of an expatriate gated community produces the spatial and social structures necessary to set up powerful binaries of place for children. Understandings and experiences of place bound up in binary constructions emerged in multifarious ways in this study – some explicitly acknowledged and expressed by students (for example Farah's 'real' vs. 'not real world' (Figure 51), various processes of 'othering', and concepts of known / unknown territories) others requiring a degree of abstraction. Binary understandings simplify and categorise the world, helping make sense of complexity and uncertainty. In this sense, binaries and categorisation are useful. Jenkins (2000 p.20) states, referring to categorization (which encompasses binaries):

'Categorization is unavoidable in knowing the social world, and in all social identification. There is no necessary equation of categorization with stigmatization or oppression. Categorization can be positive and valorizing'. (p.20)

However, the privileging of one category over another is also problematic. While oppression or privileging one category over another is not inevitable in binary constructions it is likely. For Cloke and Johnston (2005), binaries are a key facet in the 'history of Western thought, which has been shaped by dualistic thinking in terms of self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, active/passive, truth/illusion, and so on' (p.11). 'Third terms', though, reveal middle ground between oppositional terminology, dislodging binaries, providing 'an-Other set of choices'. However, for some physical binaries (for example inside/outside with reference to NQC), no 'inbetween' or 'third term' really exists or can exist. Therefore, 'critical thirding' of physical binaries is more problematic than socially produced ones. In such cases, with reference to the physical realities of large gated communities, perhaps exploring ideas of porosity and permeability of boundaries can soften these, or operationalising Massey's global, progressive, relational sense of place, emphasising places as a meeting point of stories and trajectories, rather than bounded and defined by territories. Indeed, a relational understanding of place itself disrupts the bounded understandings of place.

In the case of socially (linguistically) produced binaries, critical thirding opens up possibilities and challenges the initial pairing. However, in the process of thirding, 'the

original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives' (Soja, 1996 p.5). Here, the social and physical 'realities' of binaries and environments are acknowledged - albeit restructured and understood as a becomings, uncertain and unstable – a shift in thinking from *either/or* to *both/and also*. This transformation of either/or to both/and also has multiple wider implications in TCK and international school contexts, and the research process. Binaries like local/non-local, school/community, researcher/participant become somewhat displaced. Here Thirdspace occupies the space between these binaries. 'a space of multiplicitous representations ... a site of hybridity ... moving beyond entrenched boundaries, a margin or edge where ties can be severed and also where new ties can be forged' (Soja 1999 p 276). I consider the presence of gates and walls in NQC, and notions of 'place as prison' to expose an intrinsic binary understanding of place- 'in here' vs. 'out there'.

While I am not suggesting binaries dictate all aspects of all children's constructions and experiences of place, I am suggesting they are significant in helping understand how children make sense of and experience the world, and how they understand and represent place through language. However, it should be noted that binary thought and deconstruction of this is often equated as being 'Western' liberal thought and epistemology – further problematizing these ideas in the context of this study in a hybrid and international context. Despite this, Egan (1998) claims binary thought structures to be more universal, not limited to 'Western' thinking, and intrinsic to being human. Vygotsky alluded to the importance of binaries for children, writing about 'elementary differentiation' where young children learn to distinguish between things through contrast rather than similarity. Egan (1998) supports this, considering binary thought to be an essential element and consequence of using language and making sense of the world – 'What is beyond argument is the fact that binary structuring is found universally among human groups and is commonly used by children today. If this much is granted, what is the educational point? Why the fuss?' (p.47). The fuss for me, is that these binary constructions are mental and linguistic, as well as occasionally 'real', and in some cases they are harmful in terms of the understandings of the world they encourage.

'Forming binary oppositions is a necessary consequence of using language; it is one tool of our sense-making. Tools can be used destructively, but they also can do useful, constructive work....

[however,] destructive stereotyping and the pervasive set of gender associations in Western culture are contingent. As such we can hope to deconstruct them; what we cannot hope to do is dispense with the use of binary oppositions as long as we use language' (Egan p.47-48).

A number of binaries of place (physical, socio-cultural and imagined / representational) are identified as significant in this study: real / imagined place, temporal binaries of place (day / night), sacred / profane, good bad places, home and outside, home / abroad, home as here vs. home as elsewhere. However, the binary of place experience I would like to consider as most significant is that of inside / outside (also encompassing insiders / outsiders and 'insideness' / 'outsideness' (Relph, 1976)). This was manifest in a number of ways – in attitudes towards people within and outside NQC, and in understanding spatiality and mobility. Fundamentally binaries matter because of power. In binary understandings of people and place, power is often, though not always, ascribed to one over the other. The binary of insides/outside and insiders and outsiders is explored in Figure 113, again with reference to challenges and opportunities.

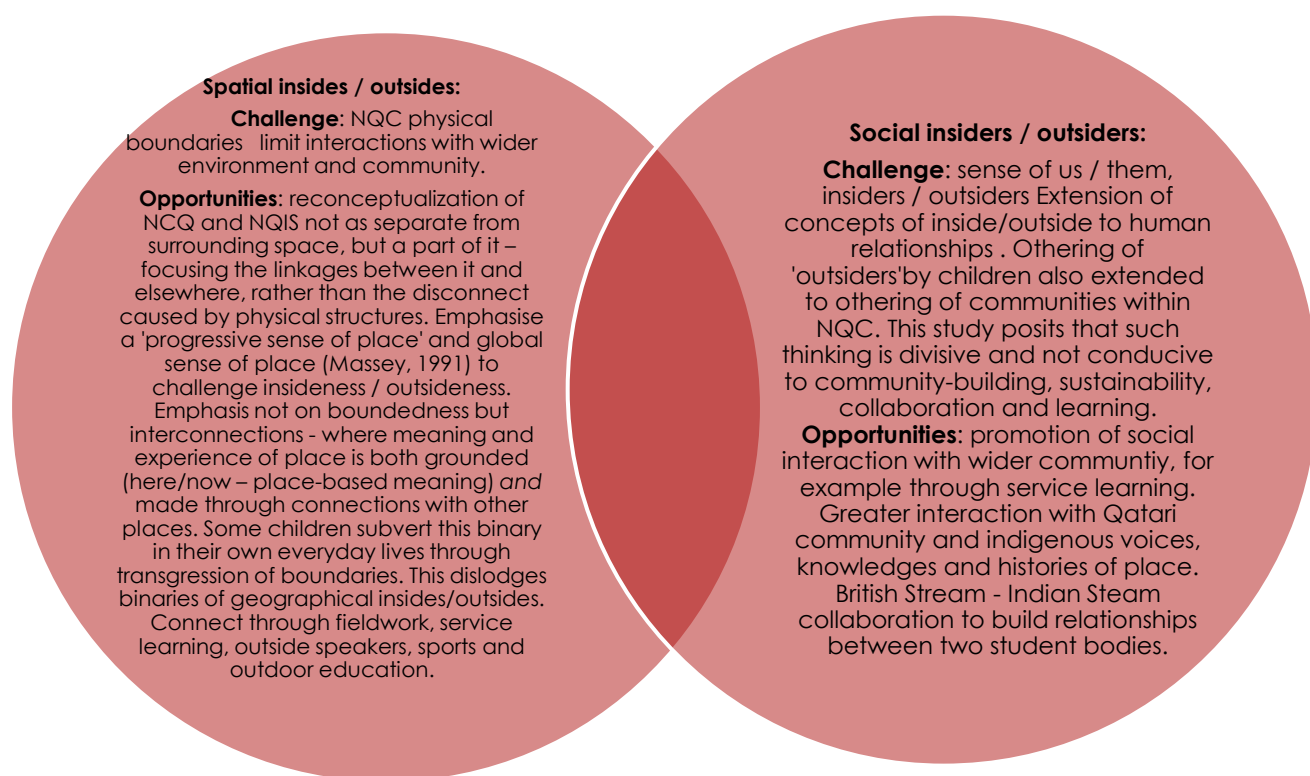


Figure 113: key binaries of place

### 9.3 ***Borders and boundaries lead to transgressions: place as negotiated***

At a number of points in the data it became clear that the creation of boundaries, physical and social, creates irresistible opportunities for transgression of these for children, and that children use the local environment often in creative and subversive ways in terms of adult structures and use of space. This is evident in 'Economic places', and children's use of the co-op as a site for pushing boundaries, as well as walls as sites of play and border transgressions. Arguably all environments have boundaries for children. Typically these are not physical, for example the soft boundary of a child knowing the boundaries of where they can / cannot play based on those dictated by parents. However, in the context of NQC boundaries are particularly 'hard'.

Transgressions of boundaries, physical and perceived, is itself constructed in different ways by different children. Sanders (2014, p. 8) found in gated communities in Shanghai:

‘all teenagers express a strong desire to transgress these spatial barriers of the compound and the associated social, cultural and age-based boundaries. Routinely moving back and forth from international schools to expatriate housing estates, students continually seek out spaces outside that they can claim for themselves, during breaks or on weekends. Leaving the compound is often linked to activities that are seen as liberating, like hanging out at “the shop”, or as crucial for urban cosmopolitan consumer culture: shopping, eating out or clubbing with an international community’

The transgressions of children in this study are more limited, not being in an urban context like Shanghai. In this study some transgressions are by children in search of peace, solitude and artistic inspiration (like Sari and Fitri), whereas others are for behaviours considered more deviant, such as smoking or drinking alcohol. However, in all examples there is a degree of transgression, opportunism and flexible use of space in sometimes unexpected ways. These microgeographies are significant for children, and arguably significant in identity formation and the making of childhood. These uses of space though cause conflict where usage conflicts with adult ideas of what a space represents and thus should be used for, especially where this involves manipulation of the environment in some way, for example graffiti. The transgression of boundaries, physical and imagined, is often linked to concepts of ‘secret’ places. I would contend that these transgressions are an embodied ‘thirling’ of some of the binaries of place outlined in 11.2.2.

## **9.4 Othering needs challenging**

Again linked to concepts of insiders / outsiders, the children in this study often exhibited xenophobic attitudes towards two main groups: Indian community members residing *within* the community (i.e. employed by Qatar Gas / Ras Gas) and South Asian migrants resident outside NQC, but working within it. The second group is



most marginalised and othered through their ethnicity, residence (outside of NQC) and status as socio-economic others. These demographic groups were viewed with suspicion and resentment by some children in the study, with a clear sense of 'us' and 'them' emerging, reminiscent of the writing of Sibley (1995) in *Geographies of Exclusion*. Clearly to promote community relations, social sustainability and a school culture of acceptance and cosmopolitanism, these processes of othering need challenging.

School has a significant role to play in challenging such representations, particularly as such attitudes may well emerge from home lives, and in the context of NQC this might mean greater collaboration between the British Stream (school in this study) and the Indian Stream. Indeed, it can be speculated with reference to the othering of Indian Stream students that the splitting of Indian students from all other children in the community is in part responsible for setting up oppositional concepts of 'us' and 'them' since it divides the child community into Indian / non-Indian. Despite their geographical proximity there is no sharing of facilities, faculty or inter-sports events and this distance is expressed in social terms by the children.

It is proposed that greater emphasis on cosmopolitanism could be beneficial in the context of NQC – where greater contact between children of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds leads to greater understanding but 'only so if understanding is a common goal of those coming into contact ... If not, it is just as likely to lead to increased violent conflict... An education system is typically representative of the socio-economic, religious, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural groups that society contains. Educational institutions bring children into direct contact with whatever diversity exists that can then inform their learning as they attempt to be more at home in the world in which they live' (Hayden, 2012 p.5-6). Cosmopolitanism is understood as 'feeling at home in the world' (Gunesch, 2004 p.256) where children have an 'interest in or engagement with cultural diversity by straddling the global and the local spheres in terms of personal identity' (ibid.). However, in international schools there is always the risk of internationalism and cosmopolitanism being tokenistic, or as Sander (2016) puts it, the 'convenient cosmopolitanism' (p.187) of flags and food, or where 'globality' is viewed in terms of cultural capital and future benefit (Valentine, 2003).

## **9.5 Children's experiences of places are inherently temporal**

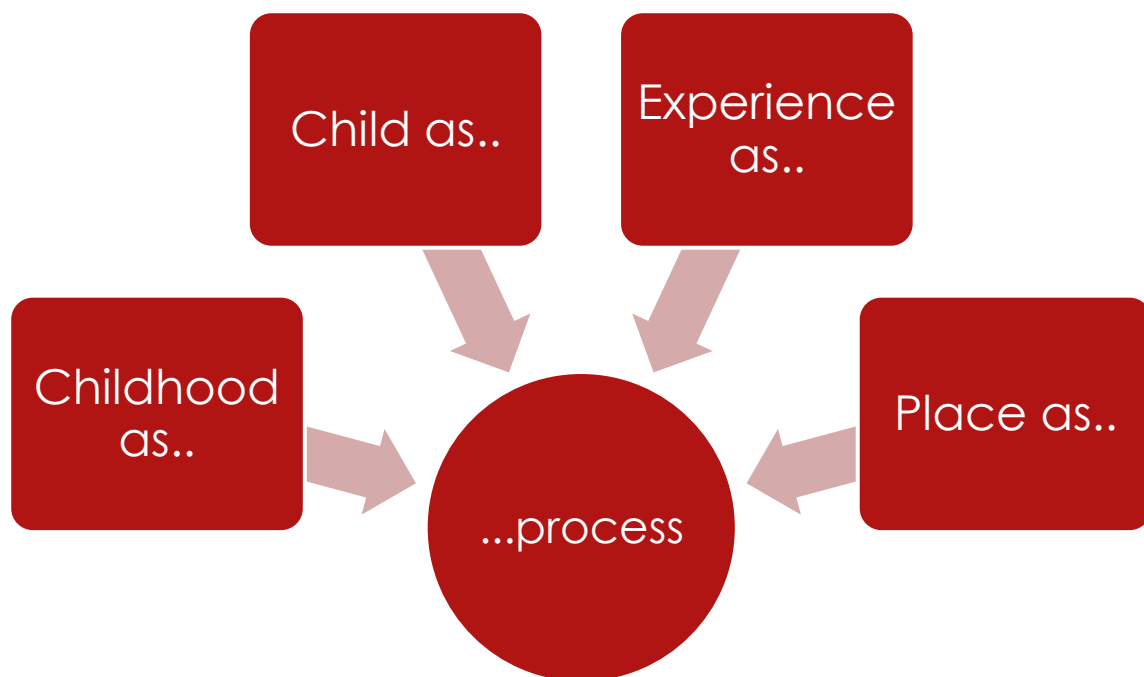
The temporal dimension of children's place experience is embedded in understandings of place as process. Thinking about temporal dimensions of place experience requires and breaking of the time / space binary where the former is in some way 'open', the latter a 'static slice through time' (Massey, 1993 p.159). Rather, both are co-implicated and inseparable. Drawing upon Massey's (1993 p.59) theorisation of space-time, where time and space are relational, experiences of them are also logically relational? Space-time 'insist[s] on the inseparability of time and space, on their joint constitution through the interrelations between phenomena; on the necessity of thinking in terms of space-time'.

This research suggests that children's experiences of place should be contextualized and contrasted with experiences of time. Two key strands here emerged:

- 1) experiences and perceptions of time being place-dependent (i.e. in some places time passes quickly, in others more slowly).
- 2) experiences of place being different at different times of day (usually related to ideas of places being scary at night) or different times of year (mostly dependent on weather)

Here, place and children need to be understood as process – places and children change and are dynamic - so experiences of them are in constant flux (see Figure 114). It should be noted that considering children as *process* is not the same as children as *becomings*, or in some way less important than adults.

An implication here is that, if place experience is so temporally variable and negotiated in different ways at different times, data collected about place experience should be understood as such. This means uncertainty is inevitable.



*Figure 114: Childhood, child, experience and place as process*

The important theoretical implications here being the need for studies that focus more on processes of local environment experience, and how this changes over time, requiring a more longitudinal approach – ‘space and identity are seen as in a constant process of being made and remade through emplaced social interactions’ (Hackett *et al*, 2015 p.5). This emphasis is in essence on instability and ongoing production (of space, place, identity), although continuity of place and intergenerational knowledge must also be acknowledged as important, albeit disrupted in a migrant context.

## **9.6 Summary and conclusions**

The findings outlined in this chapter are of significance to the school, with real-life implications for learning and social sustainability. Naturally the question is in what ways can these findings be framed as generalizations which may be applicable to other and similar contexts? While I do not want to suggest that schools in similar contexts – in the Middle East and elsewhere – will experience similar opportunities and challenges, I do think this could be possible. It is quite possible that international school communities elsewhere also face challenges of othering, and those also located in GCs may experience challenges of boundedness. However, further research is of course needed to explore these issues in other contexts.

Following on from these tentative findings for the case, the next chapter considers some wider implications and propositions arising from the study, also put forward tentatively, opening up opportunities for interesting research in schools and communities.

# Chapter 11: Implications and propositions

## ***10.1 Theoretical and methodological propositions and contributions***

Four propositions and contributions are put forward with the first two broadly theoretical-curriculum-related and the last two more methodological. The possibilities for critical place-situated education in international schools will first be explored, before exploring the potential integration of concepts of Thirdspace and critical thirding in how we engage we place and the local environment in schools, before finally examining some methodological implications of considering alternative understandings of space and place.

### **10.1.1 Place-based potentials in international schools**

A key belief in this research is that a child's existing experience of the environment, is fundamental to their learning and therefore an understanding of these experiences has potential for the development of engaging, relevant and rigorous curricula. This is also underpinned by the 'view that education can happen anywhere: through informal as well as formal experiences; in homes, communities, and environments; through interactions with the human (parents, friends, and classmates) and the nonhuman (physical objects, parks, woodlands, and buildings) world' (Martin and Pirbhai-Illich, 2016 p.355). PBE was explored in chapter 4. In this section debates around PBE are re-examined in light of the data presented in chapter 9, and with more focus on the international school context of the case. The potential of PBE (or place-situated / place-conscious) practice is examined, but with emphasis on more critical and relational understandings of place.

#### **10.1.1.1 The challenge for international schools**

International schools face the challenge of providing education for children for whom the local environment (physical, socio-cultural, political, economic) will often not, at least initially, be known to them through extensive childhood exploration and intergenerational knowledges. In contrast, in less mobile communities, children may grow up in the same or similar environment, developing detailed knowledges of the local area and culture, building relationships, observing and being a part of

processes of change. I am not suggesting that mobility is limited to TCKs, but their experiences of it are certainly intensified and accelerated. It is argued here that critical PBE, place-conscious or place-situated curriculum may help international school students know, experience and value their environments of residence in a more intimate way, and therefore provide opportunities to develop attachments to place and develop their own sense of place and place-identity – shifting from residing to inhabiting place. Children in this study have a desire to engage more with the local area, a topic raised in focus groups, to learn about the uniqueness of their current home. However, they appear limited by both their geographical context in an isolated GC and curriculum in having opportunities to do so. Many also feel gated by the physical environment, describing NQC as a prison. PBE certainly has potential to break down these boundaries, physically and mentally.

The extent to which international schools and their students engage with their local community varies greatly, in terms of formal and informal learning, and other community connections. In the context of NQIS I would contend the engagement is somewhat underdeveloped if 'local' is extended to include beyond the boundaries of the GC, and this is reflected in children's experiences of place. The potential for PBE for students at NQIS, and international schools more widely, is clear.

The concept of situated pedagogy, another term for place-based pedagogy, is explored by Kitchens (2009) who writes:

'A situated pedagogy connects the curriculum to the everyday lives of students and is interested in identity and self-formation, but also social-formation and the relationships between the two, and asks students to pay attention to their environment, and listening to what places have to tell us. It also asks students to read the world and to decode it politically, socially, historically, and aesthetically. A situated pedagogy attends to place, not only as the focus of student inquiry or academic study, but as the spaces for performative action, intervention, and perhaps transformation'. (p.240)

Kitchens frames place-situated pedagogies as a 'remapping' of 'material and curricular landscapes' (p.240). For Kitchens, some of the first calls for a situated pedagogy – one that refocuses on place – emerges in Dewey's (1997) writing, for example in *Experience and Education*. For Dewey, progressive education is

‘intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilize them as educational resources’, and at the heart of this is Humanities teaching – History and Geography. For Dewey, these subjects allow student to contextualise themselves temporally and spatially as part of the ‘bigger picture’. However, the local is not the end point for such a curriculum – ‘local or home geography is the natural starting point . . . it is an intellectual starting point for moving out into the unknown, not an end in itself’ (Dewey, 2007b p.212). Clearly for Dewey it is important for schools and curricula to make connections between the everyday lives of children and their learning, but as Kitchens notes, this is not necessarily *critical* or with an aim to be transformative. In a sense this is the distinction between place-based pedagogies and critical pedagogies of place, the potential connections between which Gruenewald (2003) emphasises in a ‘place-conscious’ curriculum. For Gruenewald, there are five key dimensions to this: ecological, political, ideological, sociological and perceptual. Gruenewald often refers to ‘decoding’, an idea I will return to – ‘For critical pedagogues, the ‘texts’ students and teachers should ‘decode’ are the images of their own concrete, situated experiences with the world’ (2003a, p.5). With these understandings, Kitchens (p.259) calls for children to become ‘psychogeographers’, showing influence from the Situationist International, asking them to

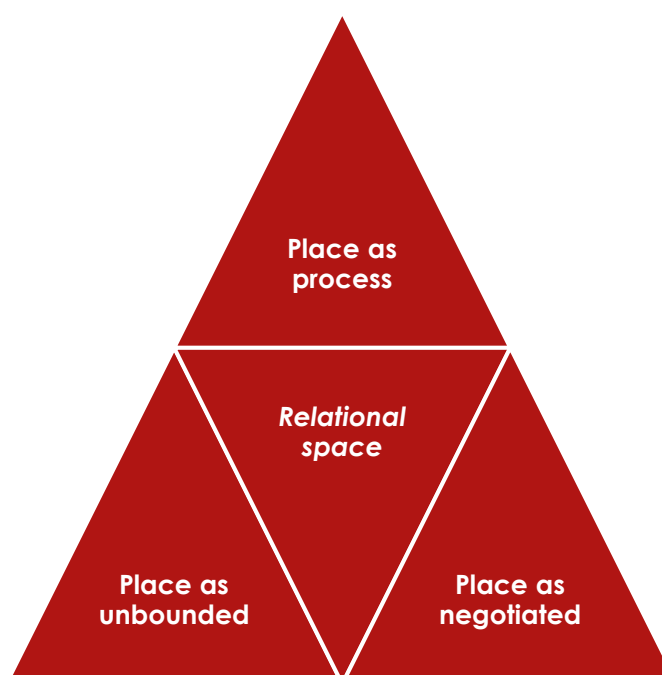
‘attend to their environment as psychogeographers, reflecting on the subjective and the objective, the internal and the material, with their bodies as well as their minds, and listening to what places have to tell us. Students read the world, experiencing living landscapes, and decode those politically, socially, historically, and aesthetically, participating in are mapping of those landscapes. A situated pedagogy attends to specific places and localities, but not merely as places for discursive analysis and academic study, but as the spaces for action, intervention, and perhaps transformation.’

This fundamentally requires a shift out of the confines of school, into the local area, shifting away from ‘placeless’ pedagogies to those place-embedded or situated. These ideas are particularly powerful in international school contexts, breaking down physical and cultural barriers between school and place. A number of schools, including international schools, have well-established fieldwork, service learning and experiential education programmes and many consider PBE to be empowering and motivating for students. However, research exploring PBE in international school

contexts is largely absent. Berting and Vernet (2012 p.22) briefly refer to the potential for wider community links, writing ‘there is great untapped potential for international schools to develop dynamic experiential learning programs through partnerships with a variety of institutions, including local and international NGOs, multinational corporations’ but appears to focus more on the ‘image’ of schools, than the learning by children.

#### 10.1.1.2 How relational space can drive globally-minded place-based practices

What is clear to me as an international educator is that a place-situated and place-conscious pedagogy in international schools must be especially globally-minded and progressive, grounded within a relational understanding of space and place, exploring places not in absolute or relative terms as bounded, isolated, nodal or disconnected, but as process, negotiated and unbounded. This goes somewhat against the ‘new localism’ of some PBE, with its risks of a somewhat parochial and conservative notion of place. Indeed, for some students, excessive focus on the ‘local’ in international school contexts could be intellectually isolating. Here, it useful to return to three of Massey’s (2005) key understandings of place, and how these might shape and influence place-based pedagogies in international schools (Figure 115). Any place-based practice or pedagogy need to be framed within a clear concept of space and place:



*Figure 115: Relational space as the foundation for PBE in international schools*



PBE in international schools should start by considering the students themselves, children who are through their everyday lives, often deeply embedded in multiple places, multiple 'bundles of trajectories' and therefore multiple places. Place-conscious education in international schools should embrace and celebrate local-indigenous voices on and of place, as well as hybrid international-migrant perspectives, all often heard in international schools, albeit sometimes with conflict emerging in these dialogues. Using PBE as a means to develop a singular construction and identity of place is not desirable since this leads to seeing places as bounded with *insides* and *outsides*, something shown to be somewhat unhelpful in Chapters 9 and 10. This is a clear challenge to humanistic notions of place as deeply rooted and bounded. These constructions are indeed potentially dangerous - the kinds of places articulated by the far right, for example. Indeed, focus on home locality in PBE 'runs the risk of encouraging parochialism, a loss of solidarity with other places and peoples, and even xenophobia which is inimical to the practice and achievement of global sustainability' (Morgan, 2011 p.96), although I would hope this would be less likely in the intercultural and cosmopolitan contexts of many international schools. Instead, as Massey proposes, places should be explored and understood as being relational – defined and made by their 'outsides' as much as by their 'insides'. This has identity implications (where identity for TCKs is defined by both 'outsides' and 'insides', however this is conceptualised), and with implications for PBE in schools:

'No longer is identity (on the broader canvas, 'entities') to be theorized as an internally coherent bounded discreteness. Rather it is conceptualized relationally – with implications both internal (in terms of fragmentation, hybridity, decentering) and external (in terms of the extension of connectivity)'. (Massey, 2006 p.37)

Therefore, something akin to a 'global sense of place' is desirable or a 'place-based global curriculum' (Kenway, 2009) which is both inward and outward looking, with emphasis on 'links and interconnections to that "beyond" (Massey, 1994, p.5). Kenway proposes a possible framework for a curriculum built around a 'global sense of place'. This framework is built around the following processes: temporal, spatial, ecological, political, imaginary and personal. In each of these, exploration of the intersection of the global/local nexus is explored as a foundation for learning.

Inspired by the potential of PBE, and my own developing concepts of a 'progressive-new-localism' where global lives need local context, I organized a trip for the participants in the research, as part of their geography studies and as a thank you for their involvement in the project to a local mangrove area behind NQC, one of my favourite places to take my own children to swim and walk when living in NQC (see Figures 116 and 117). I am presenting ideas here not as data *per se*, but as part of the wider 'story' of this research. Here the fuzzy boundary of the case becomes clear, as does my dual role of teacher, researcher, community member. During research and my teaching at NQIS more generally it became apparent that very few of the children were aware of this 'natural' and, by local standards very green area just 2km from their homes – an island with a rocky outcrop interior surrounded by mangroves – within walking / biking distance from home. From a curricula perspective the trip aimed to explore littoral environments, and involved a mix of fieldwork and time for play and free exploration. An informal in-class discussion was conducted after the trip to explore how the children felt the trip aided curricula learning (in geography and biology), as well as more informal learning about the local environment.



*Figure 116: Students from the study enjoying the outdoors near school but outside the GC. Author's own photograph.*



*Figure 117: Girls enjoying the sea (NQC in the distant background). Author's own photograph.*

There was a palpable sense that the visit had some impact in terms of breaking down the boundaries – physical and imagined - between the compound and wider local area and environment – a practical pedagogy of hands-on and physical ‘critical thirding’ the landscape by breaking boundaries by simply getting out into the environment. This kind of PBE destabilises boundaries and is thus deterritorialising. To use Orr’s (1992) language, the children subtly shifted from ‘residing’ to ‘inhabiting’ the place where they live. During the trip we discussed the history and geography of the area, and different uses of the environment. If place attachments are forged through positive experiences and memories of place, this trip highlighted for me the value of local environmental exploration with children.

The following section will explore how learning inside and outside the classroom, through the adaptation of theory from academic geography, might help to deconstruct boundaries and binaries between the community and wider environment and imagined boundaries and territorialisation within NQC.

### 10.1.2 Critical engagement with place

In this more theoretical section, the value of exploring place as a philosophical concept in school geography will be explored with reference to the decoding and deconstruction of place through 'critical thirding-as-othering' (Soja, 1996).

Gruenewald's writings (2003a) about PBE explore ideas of 'decoding place', drawing upon Freire's concept of *conscientizacao*, understood as 'learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality' (Gruenewald, 2003 p.5). To clarify, by deconstruction I am referring specifically to breaking down binaries of place and environment through thirding, and by decoding I am referring more generally to critical reflection about place.

Soja (1996, p 5) refers to 'critical thirding-as-othering' in Lefebvrian trialectic terms, disrupting dominant knowledges leading to new ways of thinking and understanding human experiences through engaging with ideas of Thirdspace. Here, Soja is critically examining tendencies for modernism to create binary categories as outlined in 10.2. Such binaries include real/imagined; nature/culture; local/global. As Hackett *et al* (2015 p14) note, "putting space first' is.. a way of overcoming.. binary logic' – whether these binaries are social/historical, real/imagined or local/global.

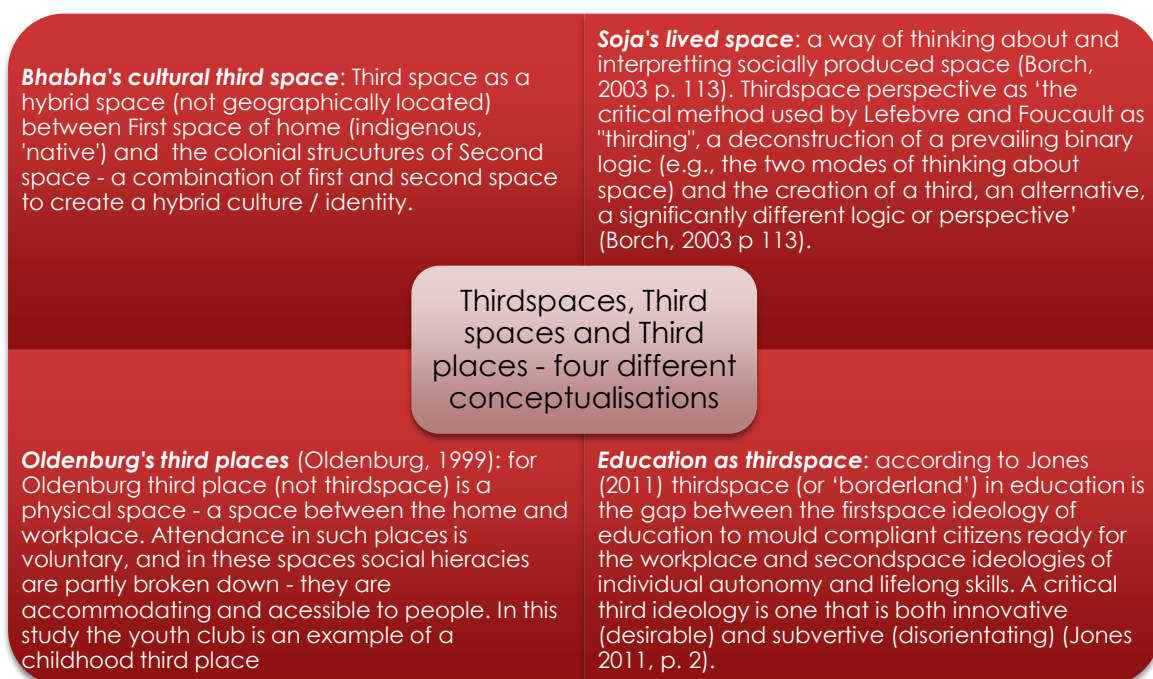


Figure 118: Contrasting thirdspaces and third places in literature

Referring to fig 118 it is clear there are contrasting interpretations and theorisations of 'Thirdspace'. It is Soja's interpretation that will primarily be developed here, although all four interpretations have some relevance to this study. For example, Bhabha's third space is reminiscent of many participants lives where the First space of home and Second space of school / the community is experienced through a lived hybrid third space. I would contend that inbetweenness and liminality describe many of the experiences of globally mobile children. Grimshaw and Sears (2008 p.263) consider this inbetweenness as enabling 'individuals to overcome 'the politics of polarity' and to establish new hybrid forms of identity'.

As previously explored in Chapter 2, Soja's conceptual tool for thinking about space and place looks at three interacting spaces which form people's lived experience in their environments. Firstspace is the built environment, including architecture, roads, form, function – physical and tactile space. Secondspace is representations of space – how people perceive, experience and represent a place, or its imagined geographies. An example here, using NQC, could be the variety of ways the gates and walls of the community could be perceived – as comforting security and safety for some, as a possible place of play and recreation or as an inhibitor to personal mobility. Secondspace is conceived through the signs and symbols of language. Thirdspace is lived space – the experience of living in Firstspace is mediated through expectations of the Secondspace. It looks at how Firstspace and Secondspace combine to make Thirdspace. Thus conceiving Thirdspace requires consideration of both physical space and mental space.

Much of what is taught in schools, across disciplines, is focused on Firstspace – physical space, patterns and trends in phenomena. In the arts, exploration of representation and imagination are more developed. The application of Soja's trialectics of space has potential curriculum implications. Along with a relational view of place, the value of decoding and deconstructing place and considering Thirdspace in the context of this research lies in the ability to break down some of the binaries of space and place which have emerged in children's understandings of their local environment and place, in particular the binary of 'inside' and 'outside' / 'insiders' and 'outsiders', and consider place from the perspective of others. While binaries help us to understand and simplify the world, coping better with complexity (Egan, 1997), they also arguably impact our identity development in potentially undesirable ways. Thus while in the context of NQC and NQIS 'inside' / 'outside' is a physical and mappable Firstspace reality, the consequences of such a Secondspace

understanding of it could be somewhat harmful in terms of creating mental / imaginative *insiders* and *outsiders*, and also in terms of limiting engagement with the wider community and environment. Therefore, a process of critical thirding, and viewing space and place more in terms of continuum and relations to other places than difference and isolation could have tangible learning and community benefits.

With reference to learning in geography, beyond the findings of this research there is a tendency in schools to explore place and places in terms of binary oppositions (Picton, 2008), often also reflected in teaching resources. Exploration of the local area provides a real opportunity for place deconstruction and decoding. A number of binary oppositions in children's place construction and experience are identified as potentially unhelpful since they establish opposition and exclusion, not sameness and interconnection (Cloke and Johnson, 2005). These are summarised in Table 29.

Oppositional word 1	Oppositional word 2	Notes with reference to study location
Inside	Outside	In physical terms – the boundary between being inside NQC vs. outside. Sometimes expressed as 'real world' vs. 'unreal world'.
Insiders / self	Outsiders / other	In terms of who belongs – the clear distinction between residents (with relatively free movement in / out of NQC vs. non-residents with significant restrictions on entry, exit and use of facilities.
Urban	Rural	This is particularly interesting in the context of an non-agricultural desert society where concepts of rural / urban are blurred, and gated communities and suburbanization create exurban and homogenized landscapes – not rural, urban or suburban but something else – transplanted communities.
Private space	Public space	Again, the boundaries of public and private space are blurred, particularly so in the context of gated communities with their surveillance of public space and maintenance of identifiable boundaries. Lack of ownership of space compounds this – no residents own their property, nor do they pay rent – everything is 'borrowed' or temporarily appropriated from the gas companies.
Global	Local	Both are experienced simultaneously, and concepts of local and global are complex in international / expatriate contexts. Massey's (2005) place as process, and global sense of place or progressive sense of place, are useful here. This is about uncertainty: 'How, in the face of all this movement and intermixing, can we retain any sense of a local place and its particularity? An (idealized) notion of an era when places were (supposedly) inhabited by coherent and homogeneous communities is set against the current fragmentation and disruption' (Massey, 1994).
Change	Stability	NQC, like all expatriate communities, is dynamic and changing on the one hand – a place of extended transit, but stable and a 'home' for many on the other.
Multicultural	Mono-cultural (Islamic)	Here, the power aspect of culture is important. While the community is multicultural in the sense of diversity, it is not a multicultural society per se with the dominance of Islamic cultural landscapes and values.
Bounded	Unbounded	Geographically NQC is bounded, but the lived experiences of place can be unbounded, for example though travel, use of the internet and transgression of boundaries.
Space of freedom / agency	Space of restriction / structure	There is a contested sense of both freedom and restriction in the community: for some the community affords freedoms not found elsewhere, for others it is a space of restriction (of mobility, of agency, of action, of lifestyle).
Connected	Disconnected	Although near a small town, the community's gated / boundedness creates a real sense of disconnection from the wider environment (in social and environmental terms). Yet, the community is connected globally in a range of ways: socially, economically, and politically.
Place	Non-place	The community is a significant place (of meaning, significance, of feelings of 'home'), yet shares many characteristics of a non-place with its uniform architecture and sense of a place of extended expatriate transit.
Offline ('real') space	Online space	Online space is experienced in place – it is situated. Children in the study interacted simultaneous online and offline, at home, school and in the community generally.

*Table 29: Significant oppositional constructions of place identified in NQC*

This exploration of binary understandings links with my previous research examining how children construct *distant* places (Picton, 2008). My longitudinal research project in a UK secondary school uncovered that children, when learning about *distant* places in geography lessons, went through stages of understanding beginning with stereotypes, leading to an understanding of place based around oppositional binaries (between self / other, home / abroad). I asserted that in making sense of place, the creation of binaries in cognitive processing of understanding was a means of making sense of complicated and abstract ideas about place. In structuralism, these binaries are a central core of human thinking and culture, usually with one binary assuming dominance over another. The critique of such binaries, in particular the dominance of one binary over the other, forms the central driving force of much post-colonial and critical theory. Post-structuralism aims to deconstruct such binaries in a process whereby the binary opposition contradicts itself and loses authority. This exposes the workings of power through binaries – the binary organization of meaning where there is a centering and marginalizing of one or the other, for example 'insiders' / 'outsiders' or 'rural' / 'urban'. One is understood as the foundational term, the other in its 'not being' that term. Difference is always therefore the 'other' of the dominant term within the binary. With reference to pedagogy in geography I suggested that:

‘ideas of relativity should be taught – wealth, poverty and difference being relative and multifarious. Ultimately the goal when studying distant places, ‘distant’ being relative one’s actual location and way of seeing the world, is to understand diversity and to critically engage with different peoples’ imaginations of places. Neither the stereotypes nor binaries which emerged in pupils’ learning journeys are desirable, instead a more nuanced understanding of similarities, and a positive perspective on difference (as opposed to difference defined by lacking/absence/negativities) and diversity is desirable. Binary contrasts can be harmful when ideas of superiority and authenticity are ingrained into one of the opposing ideas’ (p.248)

While my research explored constructions of distant place, such thinking can also be applied to local places, particularly in the TCK context of this study where global mobility is central to the place experiences of many of those in the community. Indeed, for a TCK or migrant child moving from location to location, when does place shift from being experienced as distant, unknown or unfamiliar, to being local,

familiar, known and 'home'? Can somewhere entirely local – in geographical terms – actually, in mental terms, be distant? A more fluid construction of place could prove beneficial, where places are understood as:

'mutually interconnected within continua of differences and similarities – of diversity, change and continuity – globally connected and interdependent. Worlds exist together – pre-modern, modern and post-modern, multiple and unique in space and place. All cultures and the texts they generate are multiple, hybrid, unevenly developed, characterized by multiple historical trajectories, rhythms and temporalities.... From this perspective, perhaps it is more important in... education to assist and enable students to critically engage with their own and others' ideas about... places and the way that ... [these] places are represented (Picton, 2008 p.248).

In this passage I refer primarily to 'ideas' about distant place, but this can be reconceptualised in the context of this research to focus on constructions and experiences of local place. Therefore, the potential for educators to encourage children to critically engage with their local environment – to mentally and physically deconstruct the landscapes they inhabit and experience every day – is potentially emancipatory and empowering. Indeed, I would argue some of the children are already tacitly doing this through their embodied use of space, by transgressing boundaries (physical and social) and subverting adult-designed uses for spaces. Crucially, by displacing binaries, new understandings of place can emerge, and an appreciation of how place might be experienced by others.

While an ambitious task with young children, within secondary schools and further education this certainly has potential, where the starting point is exploration of environmental experience, and the goal to deconstruct these:

'For an increasing number of children, 'home' and 'abroad', 'inside' and 'outside', 'distant' and 'local' and 'self' and 'other' are blurred and contested concepts.... Structuralism helps inform ideas about how children learn about distant places, and post-structuralism and deconstruction theory helps inform ideas about how children should be taught ... and how [learning] should help children deconstruct



texts and ideas about place in order to construct their own more nuanced understandings of places and people'. (Picton, 2008 p.248)

There is potential for deconstruction in school geography to critically engage with place and shift away from essentialist thinking about places. The embracing of theory from cultural geography provides children with the opportunity to understand that other people's place imagination and place experience might be different to and in conflict with their own. In a Piagetian (1951) sense, this is a shifting away from egocentricity to reciprocity and the internal acceptance of different ways of seeing, different ways of experiencing. This requires a great deal of reflexivity on the part of the teacher, and a heightened awareness of the power in one's own sense of place / conceptions of place, and those represented in media and resources.

The power in incorporating some ideas from Thirdspace theory in the classroom is that it allows learners to link that notion of First and Secondspace together, and to identify links between these concepts in real and meaningful settings. It is clear that the children in this study experience and 'understand' Firstspace – the pre-planned, gated, secure physical environment in which they live. This is highlighted in their maps, for example. They also appear to understand (and if not, can be guided in doing so) the Secondspace – that the architectural forms and human landscapes represent certain ideals, the gates and walls represent power, control and exclusion – this is the representational space and power in space. What Soja tries to articulate is the idea that lived space is a product of *both* of these - one sees and experiences the Firstspace through the expectations and power relationships set up through Secondspace. Thus it is argued that many of the children feel secure, or indeed trapped like in a prison, in their local area through the familiarity of Firstspace and also the sense of security and power the place holds for them. Once the children understand how their lived space both inside and outside the compound occurs, they can then begin to appreciate how 'outsiders' feel in 'their' space – how the labourers queuing for passes to enter the GC might feel with imposing architecture (Firstspace) and rituals and performance of securitisation as well as this Secondspace notion of hegemonic influence. A similar, and perhaps even more valuable exploration would be taking children resident in the GC out into the wider community to explore their feelings and responses to place. Different lives might occupy a different lived space even though their Firstspace never changes – the children live *differently* within the *same* space occupied by their friends, parents, housemaids, teachers and so on.

### 10.1.3 Different methods, different experiences of place

Experiences of place are both embodied and imagined, some knowable others unknowable and therefore impossible to articulate through language. With reference to RQ2 (How can contrasting aspects of children's place experience be elicited through different methods?) it is proposed here that the different methods used in this research have revealed different dimensions of place experience, which when combined have complemented each other in the process of co-analysis and researcher theorising. Building upon the exploration above of the curriculum implications spatial trialectics, such theorizing can now be applied to methods and their outcomes with ideas summed up in Table 30.

Trialectic of space	Summary	Methods of eliciting constructions, understandings and experiences of
<b>Firstspace</b>	Observable; mappable; measurable space (so open to accurate description); physical, mostly concrete spatial forms, but also socially produced – the outcome of human activity, personal choices and experience.	Map drawing, photovoice. Any method that allows description of physical world – the mappable and concrete geographies of our lives - from the emotional and behavioural spaces in which we live, to the complex social organization of the social practices that shape our action spaces in different contexts on different scales (home, region, nation) (Arentsen <i>et al</i> , n.d.).
<b>Secondspace</b>	Perceived; conceived; imagined (in Lefebvrian terms); symbolic; representational; contested. Expressed through signs and symbols – language and symbolism in landscape. 'For Lefebvre, this is the dominant space in any society. Located in these "dominating" mental spaces are the representations of power and ideology' (Arentsen <i>et al</i> , n.d. p.10) – it is space created by the control of knowledge. As representational space, it is space which is contested and negotiated (Birquist, 2002).	Concept maps, focus groups, drawings, interviews, oral or written <i>descriptions</i> of photographs. In this study children's conceived space emerged mostly in concept maps, focus groups and during walks – with reference to the impact of walls and gates on sense of place, for example, or representational spaces and territories. Affordances are constructed through conceived space – special places and feared places, for example. Although not a focus in this research, an exploration of the connections made <i>between</i> different ideas within concept maps could reveal further elements of perceived space, through making connections between different aspects of place experience.
<b>Thirdspace</b>	Lived, realized space; all-encompassing; a mode of thinking about space; a means of dislodging binaries of place; consideration of how power is articulated through landscapes. This space is abstract, but constituted by 'actual social and spatial practices, the immediate material world of experience and realization. Lived space overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects, and tends to be expressed in systems of nonverbal symbols and signs' (Arentsen, n.d. p.11). Where Lefebvre saw lived space as something distinct from physical and mental space, for Soja it is more akin to a way of thinking, going beyond the binaries of perceived and conceived space. It is 'a fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and virtual locus of structured individuality and collective experience and agency' (Soja, 2000, p.11).	Next steps: In the classroom during data analysis exploration of Thirdspace could be integrated into learning; in-situ methods like walking could facilitate deconstruction of place/landscape; through developing of critical geographical literacy in the classroom – deconstructing landscapes, power relations. While walking as method had potential to reveal Thirdspace, it is questionable whether any research method can truly unravel these 'real and imagined' dimensions of place. Instead, Thirdspace is argued to be a possible educational and curricula outcome of this research – a mode of thinking to be developed. As a concept it is hard to tie down, but primarily understood in this study as transcending binaries of place.

Table 30: Different methods different aspects of place experience

#### **10.1.4 A framework for co-analysis with children**

An area this research has contributed to the field is in developing a framework for co-analysis of data where both 'insider' (participant) and 'outsider' (researcher) analysis is combined. In this study 'insider' participant analysis developed the substantive categories of analysis. My 'outsider' researcher analysis put these in a theoretical and academic context. I juxtaposed analysis in terms of data-data, data-literature and literature-literature in a process of making sense of the data as researcher. While the children are experts in their lives and experiences, as a researcher I take the role of being the 'expert' in theory and the academic context of findings. This process was not without its challenges, in particular in balancing the need for the authenticity of participant voices and the need for contextualizing data in a wider academic context. I made choices about which data to use to exemplify certain points, decisions which ideally would have been made by participants themselves. As explored in 9.3 a number of challenges emerged with the use of participant created categories with reference to everyday experiences of place. This was generally where children's use and experiences of the environment deviated from widely held *adult* (researcher) understandings of function and purpose of place, where there is heterogeneity of use and 'matterings' for different children and where places are used flexibly for different purposes and with different meanings or 'matterings' at different times. Certainly further experimentation and exploration of co-analysis with children is needed and the complimentary role of emic and etic approaches.

### ***10.2 Listening to children in international schools***

The agency and voice, as speaking consciousness (Bakhtin, 1981), of international school students has been tentatively explored in literature, often more implicitly than explicitly (for example Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Devine, 2009 & 2013; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). According to Hymes (1996, p.64) the concept of voice has two different types of freedom embedded in the concept: 'freedom to have one's voice heard' and 'freedom to develop a voice worth hearing'.

Here I am interested in a particular aspect of voice, that being the ability for children to voice their experiences of, concerns for and ideas about their local area. This is particularly challenging in transnational (migrant; expatriate) contexts, where geographical mobility can result in further 'loss of voice', beyond that already eroded

by their status as children, due to frequent moves. The challenges I identify for TCKs are summarised below:

- Mobility might lead to loss of voice because a degree of community knowledge and embeddedness as a prerequisite for both Hymes' freedoms of voice – developing voice and having it heard.
- Connected to this, the international mobility that characterises many TCKs could lead to loss of interest in being heard in the first place – where placelessness (or a lack of place identity, sense of place or simply living in an 'expat bubble' (Bochove & Engbersen, 2015)) intertwines with powerlessness. Put simply, a detachment from local issues because of a feeling of disengagement, physically and socio-culturally, from the local itself.
- The complex and controversial politics and power geometries of 'indigenous', 'hybrid' and 'non-indigenous' voices adds, potentially, a further problematic dimension to listening to TCKs. If their voice represents, and is perceived as one that is 'non-local' or even colonial, this is a huge challenge to place-making and place-engagement. This would be particularly acute where a large economic gap exists between migrants and locals. This is further problematized in international schools where often there is a complex mix of 'local', 'non-local' and hybrid voices to consider – a continuum of 'localness'. Indeed, in my experience many children attending international schools do not self-identify or fit neatly into local or non-local typologies, instead through cultural identity, sheer length of residency, mixed ethnicity and nationality, fit somewhere in-between – a hybrid space. Depending on local context, such voices can be embraced or rejected.
- Finally, cultural constructions of children and childhood in many contexts, arguably including Qatar, are characterised by an understanding of children as 'less than' adults, devaluing their voice.

Despite these challenges, which are likely both real and perceived, the importance of children's voices in the creation and maintenance of child-friendly environments has been an important theme within this research. However, it is also clear that in the context of NQC children have not been consulted in any way in the development of the area, and the design of public space. The participants have voiced frustrations about their living environment, in this research and more generally, but are not

provided with opportunities to voice these concerns. This is highlighted as a challenge for transnational children.

As Shearer and Walters (2015 p.615) note in the context of Australian residential developments, children should be consulted in the development of large-scale residential areas like NQC – ‘regardless of circumstances, young people will continue to access ‘places of interaction’... and places of retreat such as shopping malls, parks and streets. A diversity of public spaces for young people to interact with each other and the wider community should be provided, where they can create their own space and forge their own identity and culture outside of the dominant adult norms... At the moment it is clear that young people are not being adequately included in the master planning process.’ This is certainly also applicable in the context of this study, perhaps even more acutely.

A first stage to affecting change is to understand environments in their current form. In particular, if we can help students understand the unique power geometries of place, landscape and environment, and their role within these, this is a first step towards voicing their concerns – a framework for doing this has been proposed with reference to a critical thirding of place. In the context of international schools, local environment exploration and change could be incorporated into the geography curriculum, as well as forging links with community service learning projects. However, as noted, the political and ethical complexities and controversies of ‘non-local’ voices, often socially and economically privileged in local contexts, trying to affect change in the local area should not be underestimated. Conversely, these ‘non-local’ migrant voices could be embraced, where collaboration between ‘indigenous’ and ‘non-indigenous voices’ could create something entirely new and worthwhile. Indeed, in some senses this is the foundation of many international school service learning programs where they collaborate with local groups to foster good community relations. This binary between ‘indigenous’ and ‘non-indigenous’ voices I refer to in itself may well be unhelpful, although arguably a reality of TCK experiences.

Arguably this research itself is a first step into introducing greater children’s voice in the community studied, as a project grounded in participatory child-centred methods, analysis and giving voice to everyday experiences. I have regarded the participants as experts in their own lives and local environment, and have learned a great deal from them. However, there is a strong argument for the need for more adult-centred,

even ‘adultist’, research exploring the more macro-political aspects of children’s every day experiences. Philo *et al* (2003 p.103) assert this ‘because, quite simply, attending to children’s voices, experiences, conducts, spaces and places—and in so doing foregrounding if not individuals per se, then certainly a micro-political arena of personal, intimate, highly embodied affairs—cannot in itself illuminate the tangled politics (and political economies) that determine the childhoods ‘made’ by adults for the children within their societies’.

Therefore, a follow up stage to this research could be a more ‘adultist’ exploration of how environments in the community could become more child-friendly, and how to encourage greater interactions with the wider environment, which could encourage stronger ties to the local area and interest in environmental issues. It is also certainly evident that there is a gap in research into children’s voice in international schools. Exploration of the local area would also facilitate a deeper understanding of issues of sustainability in the area. Concern for the environment and understanding of sustainability was evident in the children’s data, and a focus on the local rather than distant places in terms of outdoor / experiential education can be beneficial – ‘approaches to outdoor learning that seek to develop connection to and care for remote, pristine places, at the same time ignoring more local or impacted places, could present a dichotomous view of ‘nature’ to students, thereby disrupting efforts to educate for sustainability’ (Hill, 2013 p.18).

### **10.3 Avenues for further research**

The field of childhood place experience continues to develop, as initiatives to involve children in planning and development continues, and as the challenges of rapid urbanization, mobility and change challenge traditional notions of childhood and mobility.

Five key avenues for further research are identified below:

1. More analysis of the ‘*why*’ of experience: In-depth exploration of the various factors that impact place experience and interaction needs to be examined – in particular gender, age, culture and parental attitudes and aspirations.

2. Analysis of processes of change: place, place experience and childhood itself are presented in this research as *process* to emphasise change, fluidity and the complex interactions between 'local' and 'global'. Here I am suggesting that more longitudinal studies are needed to explore the process of changing place experience. This is challenging in transnational and mobile contexts, but certainly a field of study that needs addressing.
3. Further experimentation with the role of children as active researchers needed – particularly in the analysis stage. Greater involvement in the creation of methods and interpretation of data needs to be developed, breaking the binary of researcher-participant further than in this study.
4. Research exploring potential avenues for PBE / place-situated pedagogies in international school contexts. How to best conceptualise and operationalise place-based practices in international schools to encourage students to engage with their local environment in meaningful ways. Related to this, exploration of TCK voice in local issues is also a connected issue requiring further analysis and exploration.
5. The impacts of 'gatedness' on children's lives needs further exploration, in a variety of contexts, and I would encourage a rather broad understanding of gatedness, shifting beyond physical factors (such as GCs, the natural environment) to explore how different types of gatedness (physical, mental, socio-cultural) interact together.

## **10.4 Final thoughts**

International schools, international school students, and the environments in which they operate in, are immensely diverse. What this research has highlighted is the importance of pausing to consider how these students, in their multifarious ways, experience their place of residence – their local place, local environment – and how this is negotiated with understandings of place as unbounded and as process. As a geography teacher and educator in international schools I consider the local, the everyday, to be vital in the learning process for children. For me, nothing is more interesting or more important than the everyday transactions of life, these being far from mundane, especially in international school contexts. So to understand, even if in a small way, how the students in my classes experience the local environment, is useful in helping me to help them to further understand and critically engage with some of the big concepts in my discipline and beyond – space, place, scale, interaction, globalisation and interdependence to name but a few. While some

aspects of knowledge and experience of the environment is beyond language – experienced, remembered and imagined in a much more embodied sense - other aspects of experience are more knowable and shareable, and it is well worth exploring these knowledges and experiences in schools.



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# Appendix 1: Copy of letter to parents

Dear Parents and Students

I would like to introduce a research project being undertaken at NQIS British Stream as part of my PhD studies at the University of Bath, UK: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/education/> The department has a dedicated Centre for the Study of Education in an International Context (CEIC) and is one of the leading universities internationally for the study of education.

In 2008 I received my Master of Education degree from the University of Cambridge and in 2009 started my doctoral studies at Bath.

My current research at NQIS is a combination of research in geography, psychology and education exploring how children experience place / the environment. Your child is the class with whom I would like to do the research with. Below are some key points about this research:

- The research is based on the unit *Our Place in Qatar* and will be based on work all students in Year 9 will be doing.
- Both you as parents and your child will have the option to not be part of this research.
- There is no obligation for your child to be part of the study, although (s)he will be doing many of the data collection activities as part of his / her normal geography studies. If you wish to opt out the data collected would not be used as part of the study and he / she would not take part in some activities (for example interviews). *You / your child are free to opt out at any time during the study.*
- When published all names would be anonymised if the students / parent wish. However, the location of the school and name of the school will not be anonymised.
- The research will follow the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association ([www.bera.ac.uk](http://www.bera.ac.uk)) , but also take into consideration our context here in Qatar. This is to ensure the highest levels of ethical and academic integrity.
- The research is participatory. That means the children will help to decide what methods to use and what questions to ask. They will also help interpret the data and even create a findings report which will be presented to other students in school, parents and the Community Director.

What might the research involve?

- Map drawing / interpreting maps and pictures.
- Creating a collage of photographs of places significant to your child (in public areas only, not in the home).
- Making a video about life on NQC.
- Drawings.
- Interviews.
- Focus groups

What will the research be used for?

The research will have two main purposes:

1. Academic: to understand more about how children perceive their environments and how children learn about place.
2. To the school / community: to consider ways in which children can express their ideas more about the community.

If you would like to find out more about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me:  
[oliver.picton@emailchanged.com](mailto:oliver.picton@emailchanged.com)

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Picton

HOD Middle School Humanities

Lyal French -Wright

Principal

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Informed consent to participate:

I give permission for my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to be included in the research project and understand his / her work may be published in the final thesis and in any subsequent academic publications.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (student name) would like to take part in this study and understand I can withdraw at any time, and that not taking part will in no way impact my grade in class.

Email to receive online parent questionnaire: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed:           Parent

Date:

Student

Date:

## Appendix 2: Examples of group categories

Here are some examples of the group categorising stage on post-its. These are derived from individual analysis of data, and are the basis of the 'big group' themes later derived.

Group = Lala, Firza, Angie, Sumaira, Al Dana, Manahil

- Education
- Entertainment
- Sports
- Health
- Food & Drinks
- Safety
- Religion
- Rest
- Restaurants
- Bowling
- Uninteresting
- Fun kind

CATEGORIES:

- LEISURE
- HOUSING
- SECURITY
- SPORTS
- NATURE
- FOOD
- QUALITY OF LIFE
- REGULATIONS
- COMMERCE
- CONSTRUCTION
- WEATHER
- EDUCATION
- GAMING
- INTERNET
- ETHICS

CATEGORIES:

- Places of ~~exercise~~ (wii)
- Sources of entertainment.
- Friends houses
- Clubs
- Ho Villas / Apartments

CATEGORIES

- HOUSING
- LEISURE
- EDUCATION
- MEDICATION
- SECURITY
- NATURE
- COMMERCE
- SPORT
- CONSTRUCTION

Group: (names) = Manahil, Al Dana, Sumaira, Lala, Angie, Siti

Our themes are:

- # education
- # Entertainment
- # sport
- # food
- # Health
- # Safety
- # Religion
- # rest
- # restaurants
- # clubs
- # Harmony
- # Fun
- # interesting

Football ground

- Clubs
- Hospitals
- Schools
- fields
- Coop
- Refreshment
- Security
- Games
- gym
- local area.

Saudi, Arab, Islamic

## Appendix 3: ideological traditions in geography education

Ideological tradition	Characteristics	How ideology has impacted school geography	How place is understood in school context
Utilitarian	Education as training for employment, contributing to society, making a living, fact-based.	Spatial understanding in the sense of locational knowledge (sometimes referred to as 'Capes and Bays' geography. Also skills-based e.g. map reading, useful knowledge such as natural resource and economic patterns and trends. 'Colonial' geography, but prevalent in 1991 National Curriculum of England. Still significant in US human geography (e.g. AP Geography).	Space and place as location; place as mappable locations.
Cultural restorationism (part of the 'New Right' in 1980s/90s curriculum-making)	Emphasis on traditional knowledge; Cultural heritage; skills for employment, fitting into society.	As above- a colonial geography of sorts (early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century). Emphasis on trade and Empire, locational knowledge.	
Liberal (or classical humanist)	Intrinsic value of knowledge for life; intellectually challenging; aspects of heritage preservation and passing on knowledge and understanding. Emphasis on academic rigour and 'big ideas'	Conceptual, evidenced in 'new geographies' (1960s/70s O Levels). Emphasis on qualitative techniques, skills, theories, methods.	Still emphasis on place as location, but shifts towards humanistic understandings of place (e.g. Tuan).
Progressive educational traditions (child-centred)	Child-centred, emphasis on self-development. Academic subjects like geography a 'vehicle' for developing personal, learning and thinking skills – education to help children become independent.	Enquiry-based, communication skills, respect through geographical learning. 1970s child-centred approaches, with re-emergence in 1990s/2000s with emphasis on 'thinking skills' (e.g. Leat's Thinking Through Geography)	More focus on human aspects of place; places studies.
Radical / reconstructionist	Challenging dominant understandings; importance of academic knowledge and understanding lessened; more emphasis on issues-based learning and critical analysis of society and the environment. Geography's capacity to effect change.	1970s/80s radical geographies with emphasis on multiculturalism, environmental activism, global education. Also 1990s developments in Citizenship education in England, and sustainable schools / sustainable development.	Place as contested with multiple identities.
Vocational skills (also links strongly to utilitarian)	Skills for the workplace, using real-life of work-based situations in process of learning	Key skills emphasised, work-related contexts for learning, 'Geography, Schools and Education' project in 1980s.	Skills associated with place-mapping, locational knowledge.

## **Appendix 4: Interview schedule for school admin interviews**

Where do you grow up as a child and what do you remember about the environment of that place?  
(ice-breaker)

In what ways do you think the physical environment in our context of NQIS / NQC / Qatar affects children's relationship with their environment?

What factors are important in explaining how children at our school interact with their environment? Why?

How might mobility and status as expatriate impact how our students experience their local environment?

How might interactions with the environment affect learning in school?

Do you think it is important for schools to engage with the local environment and community? Why?

What does the school do to encourage community and place-engagement?

What are the challenges, from the perspective of admin, in encouraging engagement with local community and area?

How is the school integrating the localisation requirements of the SEC? Do you think this is successful / important / tokenistic?